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LIFE OF HUSAIN

(THE SAVIOUR)

BY

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PREFACE

THERE is no cultured being, I believe, in the world who is not acquainted with the heart-rending events of the field of Karbala and the world-renowned name of its hero. As for India, there is none, whether Hindu or Moslem, Christian or Jew, Jain or Budhist, man or woman, boy or adult, who has not witnessed the grand mourning celebration of Muharram performed not in any hidden nook or corner but on public roads and streets, on hills and plains, in cities and hamlets, in palaces and cottages from the lofty Himalayas down to Cape Comorin. It is strange that English literature so rich with biographies, adventures, scientific, historic and romantic treasures of the past and present, is devoid of a separate volume allotted to the life of this emblem of self-abnegation whose brilliant character and matchless endurance have dazzled the eyes of all advocates of patience and resignation. Several authors have attempted to give vivid pictures of stories, whose chronology is not yet traceable and whose antiquity has led many to doubt the reality and genuineness of the stories themselves and to suspect them as the production of intelligent heads for the inculcation of high moral and ethical principles to the common folk in the most appealing dramatic fashion. But eye-witnessed facts as true as the day occurred a thousand years ago among the so-called 'most civilized people of the middle ages,' recorded in history by authors of the age, are relegated to darkness and are not compiled to form a readable volume in English Literature.

To fill in this gap, I have attempted in the following pages to give a brief account of the noble features and

events of Husain's life and have tried to explain at some length how he became the target of a world of miseries for merely upholding the right and how his unflinching character and powerful resolution kept him firm in his unprecedented hardships. The fear of losing all he owned in this world could not move him an inch from where he was and, like a perfect man that he was, he faced inconceivable calamities which fell to his lot as the result of his unshakable attachment to the Lord and His Commandments.

I am not unconscious of my weakness and tender an apology to the English knowing world that my attempt has been in a language foreign to me. I believe better heads and hands could have undertaken this work with better results.

GHULAM ABBAS ALI

‘THE HINDU’ (Madras)

(Sunday, January 4th, 1931, Supplement)

A GREAT MARTYR

Life of Husain.—By Alhaj Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali, pp. 360. Rs. 4. 13, Sardarjung's Garden, Rayapattah, Madras.

It appears that there was no biography of the great martyr of Karbala in the English Language and therefore our thanks are all the more due to Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali of Madras for having filled this gap with a very interesting and informative book. Husain, the brave son of the great Khalifa Ali, the darling offspring of the lady of Heaven Faima and the most beloved grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, was a great personage whose unique qualities of head and heart raised him to the position of the saint as well as an Imam—the born guide and leader of men. There was never a person of such high eminence in the world's history who was doomed to fall a victim to such cruel circumstances as Husain, and yet mankind would have been deprived of the noblest example of self-abnegation, sublime sacrifice of self and all that was near and dear to oneself, unexemplified self-control, superhuman endurance, lion-hearted bravery in combat followed by pigeon-hearted gentleness to the fallen foe, and history would have been the poorer for want of a soul-stirring episode, if one of the greatest tragedies that have ever been recorded had not been enacted at Karbala on the tenth day of Muhorram in the sixty-first year of Hijrah.

Just as Husain was the personification of all that was good and noble in man, his persecutor and instigator of his murderer Yezid was, by the circumstances of his birth, environment and upbringing, a product of all that could be most debased in humanity. By placing these two persons in juxtaposition one is tempted by the attention compelling contrast to build up an allegorical story of good and evil, analogical to the story of angels and Satan in the *Koran*, but facts have anticipated the imagination and in no case has it ever been so true as in this that sometimes facts are stranger than fiction.

No one can describe the life and doings of a hero with great decorum and more faithfully than an ardent and intelligent follower of his, who possesses all the fervour and enthusiasm of hero-worship, and though his writings may here and there be open to the charge of displaying uncritical bias or sectarian prepossessions, I have not found anything in the book under review, which is calculated to give the slightest offence to a non-Shia Muslim, who does not share some of the convictions of the biographer. The naive manner in which the story is told is very refreshing, and the style of writing, forms of expressions and the metaphysical treatment of various points, are as oriental in character as the subject matter of the story itself. The book is also well planned and the chapters on (1) Pre-Islamic Arabia, (2) Prophet Mohammed, (3) The first rulers of the Islamic commonwealth, and (4) The Khilafat of Hazrat Ali provide the historic foundations for the story of Imam Husain's life that follows in natural sequence and make the book a complete treatise on the subject.

(Sd) YACUB HUSSAIN.

‘THE MUSLIM REVIEW’ (Lucknow)

(February 1932)

Life of Husain.—By Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib.

Recently we had the opportunity of reading the book bearing the above title, written by Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib of the Government Mohammadan College, Madras, author of *Maxims of Ali* and other useful works.

The book comprises fourteen chapters covering three hundred and sixty pages. We quote below the headings to enable our readers to form an idea of the scope of the work :—

- Chapter 1. Pre-Islamic Arabia.
- „ 2. Mohammad the Grandfather of Husain.
- „ 3. Husain's Boyhood.
- „ 4. The first Rulers of the Islamic commonwealth.
- „ 5. Ali at the head of Muslim commonwealth.
- „ 6. Hasan succeeds Ali.
- „ 7. Yezid, son of Moawiah.
- „ 8. Yezid at the head of Islamic world.
- „ 9. Husain at Mecca.
- „ 10. Husain leaves Mecca.
- „ 11. Husain in Karbala.
- „ 12. Ashoora the tenth day of Muhorram.
- „ 13. Misfortunes of Husain's family.
- „ 14. Conclusion.

The book is very well written and contains sound facts, save a few rare cases, derived from authentic sources. The author has treated the subject on rational principles and the sequences of events have been well brought out. The book is a very good reply to the critics of the type of the late Mr. Saladin Khuda Bakhsh. The Hero is not a myth, but a human being of flesh and blood, possessing the noblest virtues the human nature is capable of. He does not belong to a particular nation, but is a world-hero, as his noble example is equally useful and instructive to all mankind. Without the distinction of caste, colour or creed all mankind can join in commemorating his martyrdom and in following his noble example and assimilating his exalted character. We congratulate the author on producing this useful book and recommend it to our readers.

Editor.

‘NEW INDIA’ (Madras)

(December 17, 1931)

Life of Husain.—By Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib.

Husain is one of the shining heroes of Islam. His life is a sermon on sacrifice for one's religion. And it is his indomitable faith in the righteousness of the principles of life, as taught by the prophet of Arabia (on whom be peace) and the fortitude with which he defended them on the field of Karbala, which have moved the hearts not only of millions of Muslims but of others as well. But for his supreme sacrifice, the story of Islam would have been written differently from what it is to-day. As the Rt. Hon'ble Syed Amir Ali says in his *Spirit of Islam* :

'The tragical fate of Husain and his children sent a thrill of horror through Islam and the revulsion of feeling it caused proved eventually the salvation of the faith.'

A full-size biography in English of such a hero, therefore, had for long been a desideratum. This has now been fulfilled by Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib, whose book, under review, takes the reader from Husain's childhood, with its sidelight on the Prophet's love of children—to wit, his observation: 'I love Husain and Hasan not because they are my grand-children, but because they are beloved of God'—through the period of his adolescence and manhood, with a history of Arabia of the times as its background, to the tragedy of Karbala, where the hero finds his fulfilment in martyrdom for the cause of Truth, and ends with an account of the misfortunes of Husain's family together with a summing up of the reactions to the tragedy which followed in the world of Islam.

The author has written about the subject of his biography with enthusiasm, which has, however, made the treatment at places rather diffuse. When the second edition is brought out we trust it will be much more compact and also coherent in its various parts. Notwithstanding these defects, we cannot refrain from congratulating the author on his achievement which, we are sure, will be appreciated in no small measure by the English-speaking world.

'UNITED INDIA AND INDIAN STATES' (Delhi)

(20th June 1931)

Life of Husain, by Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib, is a tale of that great martyrdom at Karbala, which even after a period of a thousand and three hundred years is widely mourned today during the Muhorram. The book describes the rivalry between the Omiads and the Hashimites, even going back to Pre-Islamic Arabia in order to provide the reader with a proper perspective. A brief survey has been taken of the career of Muhammad and of his son-in-law Ali, and rivalries regarding the succession to the Khalifa's office, subsequent to the passing away of the Prophet and up till the great tragedy of Karbala, have been described in detail by quoting various authorities. The great qualities of Husain and the whole pathos of his sacrifice have been well brought out by the author.

'THE HINDUSTAN REVIEW' (Allahabad)

(March and April 1931)

Moulvi Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib says in his preface to the *Life of Husain* that there has not been written before this, any complete biography of this illustrious grandson of the Prophet of Islam. The author has fulfilled this want by this exhaustive

account of a personality whose faith, courage and determination had already made for it a permanent niche in the temple of the immortals.

‘ THE PEACE MAKER ’

(March 1932)

The Life of Husain.—By Mr. Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib.

The circumstances that have lead to the universal celebration of the Muhorram festival are of such heart-rending nature that with the span of centuries the sorrow is only aggravated. The misery and hardships that Husain and other members of the Prophet's family suffered at the hands of the barbarous and heartless hordes of Yezid cannot but touch the heart of any one who has taken the trouble to know the significance of Muhorram. Amidst the wailings of children for a cup from the Euphrates to quench their parched tongue and the selfless but vain attempts made by Husain's faithful followers to reach the river through the inhuman human fence stationed to cut off any such attempt, the calm but dignified forbearance and suffering of Husain with his faith completely centered in Allah, mark him out as one of the rare jewels of humanity. The field of Karbala sown side by side with the seeds of barbarity of Yezid's men and of martyrdom of Ali's family and nourished with the ancient Arab blood has produced the ever-increasing crop of Husainism admired by all alike, irrespective of caste or creed.

Every nation has its own martyrs, and every martyr has his own admirers and blasphemers. But the martyrdom of Husain stands unrivalled and evoking as it does universal sympathy and admiration, Hindus, Christians, Parsees and almost all communities join the Muhorram celebration which annually commemorates this martyrdom.

Moulvi Hirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib has rendered a service to the public at large by bringing out this book which shows in all vividness the vicissitudes of Islam in its beginning and how the horrors of Karbala paved the way for the growth of that religion. The book affords a very interesting reading and the heart of the reader while absorbed will naturally go out to the founder and the early champions of Islam—the Prophet, Ali, Fatima, and her children Hasan and Husain. It is no wonder then that those who know the significance of Muhorram join it in thousands.

The importance of the subject narrated in a simple style which could be understood by an average reader makes up for any high standard of English which a few might like to read. But the simplicity of the narration makes the history more appealing.

CHAPTER I

PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

BEFORE we begin the actual biography of this saintly personage, who revived, with his own blood, and that of his nearest kith and kin, Islam strangled at the hands of those known not as infidels and 'Kafirs' but as Muslims, we have to throw some light on the pre-Islamic History of Arabia, to put the reader in the proper position to understand the life of Husain, and the sad events with which it was attended. Ever since the settlement of Ishmael, the first son of Abraham (*may peace be on both*), in the barren deserts of Hidjaz, the Ishmaelites were leading lives of hardship and trouble for want of sufficient produce due to scarcity of water and productive soil. Dates and the milk of she-camels formed their main diet and rearing cattle was their chief occupation. The dry and healthy climate coupled with the struggle for bread made them sturdy, physically enduring and painstaking, and at the same time resolute, blunt and unyielding to any force brought to bear upon them. They could not cultivate letters as the greater part of their lives was engaged in the hard duty of earning a living. They were no more than nomads, roaming about with their wives and children, halting at times to graze their cattle, if a suitable pasture caught their sight. With the bare exception of a particular line of Ishmael's descendants, all the rest that inhabited the sandy plains of Arabia were addicted to the worst immoralities, drinking and debauchery being the simplest and most ordinary among them. Marrying their

own fathers' wives and burying their own children alive, were crimes counted as nothing. The Tribes were engaged in most deadly wars for more than half a century because one of them, in driving a camel from a field, threw a stone which happened to strike its eye.

But it is in the unfathomable depths, that we find the most brilliant pearls: it is in the jet black coalmine that shining bits of diamond modestly hide themselves; and it is from among pricking thorns that the scented breath of the rose issues and supplies fragrance to us. So it was among these barbarous, unlettered, haughty, unyielding and immoral folks, that the most pious and God-fearing, most learned and generous hearts lay, uncared for. Just before the Prophet of Islam rose with his commission to subdue the world mentally and morally to the commandments of the Almighty, there were in Arabia two main branches of the Quraishis (a particular line of the descendants of Ishmael) who were honoured by the unlettered Saracens, as the noblest and most powerful among them. They were known as the Hashimites and the Omiades.

Abdi-Manaf, a powerful Quraishi of high reputation had twins, who were born, back to back, unseparated from each other. A surgeon was called to separate them which he did by drawing his lancet and cutting through the common skin of the back which held the two together. The father called one of these Hashim and the other was named Abdi-Shams. A priest standing by predicted that, since a weapon had passed between the spines of the two babies, everlasting wars between the descendants of the two brothers were inevitable. The prediction came to pass. By turning over the pages of Arabian History both before and after the rise of Islam we find on various arenas, Hashimites, sons of Hashim standing on the one side and Omiades, the descendants of Omia, the son of Abdi-Shams,

on the other side, nursing wrath against each other and ready for military operations, with a view to annihilate one another. This is how a superficial observer would regard it; but going deeper into facts and carefully studying the lives of the individuals that constitute the tribes of Hashim and Omia, one cannot avoid remarking that, as the former were representatives of virtue, piety, generosity, liberality, nobility and learning, the latter were symbols of wickedness, self-conceit, intemperance, stinginess, debauchery and ignorance. To give a brief description of the characteristic features of the two tribes, it can be asserted that both inherited resoluteness and strong will from their ancestors, but the Hashimites utilized these in the cause of purity and virtue while the Omiades were firm supporters of vice and wickedness.

The Hashimites, though poor and penniless, as the natural consequence of modest nobility and liberal hospitality, were held in high esteem by the Saracens, as is evident from their holding, generation after generation, the trusteeship of the Kaaba, a sacred duty which could never be aspired to in those days, but by the most holy of the Children of Ishmael. The Omiades were rich and wealthy and all they cared for was to hoard treasures at any cost and to utilize them in luxury and in satisfying their carnal appetites. Wealth breeds pride and learning develops virtue. The honourable position occupied by the poor Hashimites as the outcome of their learning and virtuous deeds and their trusteeship of the Kaaba were sufficient reasons to excite in their hereditary opponents a burning jealousy and unquenchable desire to destroy their civil, political and religious supremacy. This hidden fire burst into flames when *Abdul Muttalib*, a son of Hashim, miraculously uncovered the sacred well of Zemzem which had been covered and hence forgotten,

whereupon his dignity and fame was doubled in the eyes of the Saracens and continued to be so until his demise. The Omiades could not bear to see their cousins in such a sublime position and they used their wealth to leave no stone unturned to overthrow the Hashimite authority and prestige. The only fault of Hashimites was that they were good and virtuous, if virtue was a crime. The behaviour of a Hashimite was dignified and becoming his noble tribe when he observed an Omiade vilifying his clean name by concocted stories. When a tale-bearer brought such a story to a Hashimite he was sent away with this reply; 'If I am really a culprit as the Omiade asserts, may God pardon me. But, if the charge laid at my doors is baseless and unfounded, may God pardon my back-biter.'

When Abraha, the Abyssinian Prince, with his invincible soldiers mounted on elephants came down upon the 'Kaaba' to destroy it, Abdul Muttalib, held the ring of the door of the sacred building and cried aloud 'Defend, O Allah! Thine own house! for Thy servants are too feeble to oppose violence with force. Suffer not the cross to triumph over the "Kaaba";' and a host of birds suddenly appeared with stones in their beaks and claws and overshadowed the enemy. They hovered over the elephants and soldiers and dropped the stones with such force that the enemy was utterly routed and the prince had to flee in fright and despair leaving many a dead man on the field. This re-kindled the fire of the enmity of the Omiades who re-invigorated their efforts to suppress the growing power of the Hashimites.

Several pages of old Saracenic history are devoted to describe the almost fruitless efforts and devices of the Omiades to gain their object.

To a superficial observer these were but manifestations of ignorance and base selfishness of two wild and barbarous.

tribes of Arabia. But if one goes deeper into facts and makes a critical and philosophic study of the subject, one has to admit that it was not merely a long quarrel between two tribes but a continued strife between virtue and vice, learning and ignorance, piety and impiety and between godliness and devilry.

CHAPTER II

MUHAMMAD, THE GRANDFATHER OF HUSAIN

(May peace be on them)

THE same year that Abraha, the Abyssinian Prince came down upon 'The Kaaba' with a view to destroy it, but was forced to retire and suffer death from a God-sent pestilence, there was born in Mecca, among the Hashimites, a boy, who in after years proved himself to be the prophet promised to Moses, in the Old Testament.

'I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.' (Deuteronomy Ch. 18, v. 18.)

A long chain of prophets had already risen among the Israelites the last of whom was Jesus; but till then none had sprung among their brethren, the Ishmaelites. 'The Comforter,' as predicted by Jesus (St. John Ch. 16, v. 7), 'That Prophet,' in the terms of John the Baptist (St. John Ch. 1, v. 21) and the 'Law-giver like unto Moses,' made his appearance into the world, from among the brethren of the Israelites, to clear the world of its evils and vices and to fill it with Justice and Righteousness and to preach the Unity of God to those who were addicted either to Trinity or Idolatry. It was this 'Mahamath' the son of 'Vishnuveesu,' by his wife 'Somthi,' about whom Mahadev predicted long long ago to his wife Parvathi. Vishnu is a Sanskrit name of God and Veesu means a servant, thus the whole name Vishnuveesu indicates 'The servant of God,' which is synonymous with the Arabic Abdulla, the

name of Muhammad's father: In Sanskrit, the word Somthi indicates 'a trustworthy woman' and in Arabic, the word, Amina, the name of Muhammad's mother bears the same significance as Somthi in Sanskrit.

Many extraordinary events marked the birthday of Muhammad, the last and greatest of the chain of those saintly individuals that were commissioned by Allah to preach to humanity His right path. The palace of Nowsheerwan of Persia was shaken to its very foundation by a violent earthquake and the fire that had been burning incessantly on the Zoroastrian altar for over a thousand years was suddenly extinguished as a mark of respect for the appearance in this world of the greatest advocate of Unity. The idols in the Kaaba tumbled down as their destroyer was born. The poor child had a very sad beginning. He was not destined to see his father, Abdulla, who had died a few months prior to his birth. The child was left, therefore, to the care of his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, who spared no pains to comfort and bring him up as his own son. Muhammad had hardly completed his seventh year, when another calamity befell him.—The generous grandfather was also taken away from him. During his last hours he wisely transferred the duty of maintenance and care of the promising boy to another son Abu Talib, to whose lot had now fallen the trusteeship of the Kaaba.

Abu Talib did all in his power to comfort and please his nephew, by placing his bed near his own and courteously giving him a seat at his table. Nay, he loved Muhammad more than his sons, as can be demonstrated from the fact that, when the Quraishis resolved to assault and slay Muhammad in his teens for his direct refusal to associate with them in their worship of idols, Abu Talib was found at the dead of night, causing one of his sons to exchange

beds with Muhammad thereby showing his readiness to sacrifice his own son for the nephew. Under the paternal care of such a kind uncle, Muhammad grew up luxuriantly and was an excellent associate with him in his long journeys on business.

The impoverished condition of Abu Talib compelled him to request 'Khadija,' the wealthiest Quraishi lady of Arabia, whose fortune had secured her the title of a queen, to grant Muhammad an agency to sell her merchandise in distant parts. This noble lady had the same lineage as Abu Talib, and her good nature had always, at heart, the rise and uplift of the sinking Quraishis. Mecca had experienced the nobility of Muhammad and there was none who would not certify to his reliability, trustworthiness and intelligence. Khadija readily complied with the request and soon Muhammad was out, disposing of the merchandise, to great advantage, and purchasing fresh stuff suitable for the market of Mecca. Khadija, struck with the intelligence and honest dealings of the young man, and reading in his face all the attributes and good features of the last prophet predicted in Divine Scriptures, soon entered into a matrimonial contract with him and remained his most faithful and obedient partner helping him with all the means at her disposal. Muhammad's gratitude, in return, was in no way inferior. He respected her and never wounded her feelings by allowing a rival to share his love until her demise. Some authors have laid foolish charges accusing the prophet of being lustful and over-indulgent in sexual passions. No sane man would for a moment consider one that spent the prime of his life with an aged lady over fifteen years older than himself, in spite of several offers, as licentious and addicted to sexual indulgence. But the plurality of wives that Muhammad allowed himself in his last fifteen years had its political

and religious grounds. Many families that had long been opposing him were reduced to submission by his taking a wife from among them and we find a number of his bitter enemies after such marriages standing by him and charging his opponents. The defensive or retaliative battles that he fought caused many deaths among his supporters and the widows they left had none to whom they could look for support. Muhammad generously allowed some of them to enter his own harem and persuaded his disciples to follow his example, thereby making a well-planned arrangement for the maintenance of widows and orphans.

Muhammad and Khadija remained a happy pair and begot two sons and four daughters out of whom none survived long, except the youngest named Fatima on whom the greatest part of our future history depends.

The Prophet Muhammad had several revelations through the Angel Gabriel. This Angel once appeared and revealed to him the Divine commandment to announce his mission. This he secretly disclosed to his wife Khadija and his cousin Ali, son of Abu Talib. Ali was then a boy of eleven, but of sound judgment and mature wisdom, who used to accompany the Prophet in his solitary visits to the neighbouring hills and valleys whither he used to go to offer undistracted prayers to Allah. The wife and the cousin unhesitatingly accepted the prophet's words, they swore allegiance to him and remained his most sincere disciples, consoling and assisting him when called to bear the raileries and rebuffs of his countrymen. They both secretly observed the rites and ceremonies taught to them by the Prophet of Allah. These very same rites and ceremonies in after years became characteristic of Islam.

The fortieth year of the Prophet's life opened a new page in the history of the world, by his open declaration

of his message, first to his nearest relations and afterwards to the wide world. Gabriel revealed to him the commandments of the Almighty, saying—

- ‘ Invoke no other God with Allah ’
- ‘ Lest thou be of the tormented ’
- ‘ Utter warnings to thy nearest kinsfolk ’
- ‘ And lower thy wings (be meek) to the faithful who follow thee ’
- ‘ If they prove disobedient, say ’
- ‘ Verily, I am clear of what ye do ’
- ‘ Rely thou upon the Mighty, Merciful one ’
- ‘ Who seeth thee, when thou risest up ’
- ‘ And when thou fallest among the worshippers ’
- ‘ Verily He both heareth and knoweth ’.

(*Sura XXVI*).

The Prophet of Allah, in obedience to these orders, invited the descendants of his grandfather for a feast and, when they had finished it, he addressed them in the following words:—‘ Never has an Arab presented such valuable boons, as I now do to you, happiness in this world and perpetual joys in the world to come. God has ordained me to invite people to Him. Who will join me in my sacred work and become my brother and my successor? ’

A profound silence prevailed over the whole assembly, when Ali, the youngest of them all, stood up and declared most enthusiastically, ‘ I, Prophet of Allah! will join you, and become your brother and caliph.’ The Prophet embraced him and said ‘ Behold, this is my brother, my successor. Listen to him and obey his orders.’ Then he began to pray to God saying ‘ O Almighty! strengthen my back with my brother, as Thou strengthened Moses with his brother Aaron. Appoint Ali my minister as Aaron was appointed Moses’ minister by Thee.’

For three years Muhammad was preaching his religion secretly to the Quraishis, but none came forward to swear allegiance to him. On the other hand, they tried to persecute him, but dared not do so in the face of Abu Talib, whom they acknowledged as their spiritual and political head. But once again Gabriel appeared and dictated to Muhammad the commandment, to announce the message publicly to all, Quraishis or non-Quraishis, that inhabited Arabia. Muhammad, ever ready to execute Divine orders, stood on 'The rock of Ishmael' that lay in the mosque and openly declared 'O Quraishis and other tribes that dwell in our country! I invite you to acknowledge Allah as the only God and me as His Prophet. I command you to shun idolatry. If ye obey me, verily ye shall be the sole masters of Arabia and Persia.' The Arabs were angered by these words, which, in their opinion, were immoderate and insulting and began to accuse the Prophet of either insanity or impertinence. But they could do him no harm, for the great Abu Talib was with him. They resolved to gather round Abu Talib to complain to him of his nephew's transgression and to get him to persuade Muhammad to abstain from interfering in their worship of idols, by promising to him the most beautiful girl in Arabia and as many presents as would make him the wealthiest man in the land. When Abu Talib brought this news to Muhammad the latter replied in right earnest 'I have brought to the Arabs the true religion of God's prophets. Even if they place the sun on my right palm and the moon on my left, I will not refrain from carrying out the Divine injunctions. Uncle! I shall make them rulers of Arabia and Persia, if they only acknowledge and declare, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet." Further, I promise to them the perpetual joys of the world to come.'

The Quraishis, disheartened at this blunt refusal of Muhammad, severed all their connections with him, and he had to remain for some time a refugee in 'Sha'bi Abu Talib' under the paternal care of his uncle. Another sad year saw Muhammad bereft of the kind Abu Talib and the obedient and loving Khadija, and mourning over the irreparable loss of his uncle and wife, whose presence had served him as the strongest refuge against his enemies. The Quraishis, finding Muhammad alone and helpless, tormented and persecuted him and even threatened his life, if he would not change his conduct.

It would be too long to enumerate the various kinds of punishment meted out to the Prophet of Allah merely for inviting the Meccans to Monotheism. Suffice it to say that the Prophet, tired of the maltreatment he suffered at the hands of his countrymen, had to leave Mecca and flee for his life to Medina. On a certain night, the infidels led by Abu Sufian an Omiade resolved to slay Muhammad in his bed. Gabriel revealed this conspiracy to the Prophet, who consequently asked Ali, son of Abu Talib, to repose on the Prophet's bed under his mantle. Ali most willingly lay down as directed, without the least fear of losing his life for the Prophet's, and Muhammad secretly left for Medina. It would be deviating much from the subject, to deal with the hardships the Prophet suffered on his way; but it is necessary to explain the risky part played by Ali, the father of our hero, whose duties at this critical moment were enormous and most trying. He had voluntarily to put in danger his own life, in the attempt to save the Prophet. He had to clear the Prophet's debts in Mecca and to return to the owners all articles left to the Prophet's care in virtue of his reliability and trustworthiness. Last but not the least, he had to take the Prophet's

family from the midst of his most inveterate enemies and march on foot straight to Medina, with the ladies mounted on the only camel owned by him. On the appointed night, the conspirators entered the Prophet's house and thought they were about to accomplish their undertaking, when one of them removed the mantle, and, to their greatest surprise and despair, found Ali in the bed. 'Where is Muhammad' asked one of the infidels in a most passionate tone. 'I was not deputed by you to watch him' was the prompt reply from Ali's lips, upon which the conspirators went away in anger and shame.

There is one more touching episode connected with this emigration. With swollen and bleeding feet and with a face and garments full of dust, Ali reaches the Prophet's presence in Medina. He is about to help his family to dismount. Among them is Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, a girl of eight. Muhammad, moved by Ali's appearance, kisses and embraces him with paternal affection. The severe trials that Ali was put to are enumerated and he is praised and congratulated for his hard gained success.

This emigration of Muhammad is counted as the Muhammadan Era and dates some 622 years after Christ. It was in September A.D. 622 that Muhammad reached Medina, and, just after his settlement there, he considered it his primary duty to construct a place of worship where he could preach his new faith to all that assembled round him in quest of truth and knowledge. A mosque was erected for the purpose and, adjacent to it, some petty dwellings were built, the doors of all of which opened out in the street, except those of the Prophet and Ali whose entrances were within the compound of the Mosque.

At about the close of the second year Hijri, when Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, had completed her

ninth year, she was given in marriage to Ali, in obedience to the Divine Command. The marriage was marked with great simplicity and we read in history that Fatima was sent to her husband's house with a single new jacket prepared for the occasion, in addition to her old one. The dowry comprised a mill-stone, two earthen pots, a pair of new shoes, a mantle, a couple of pillows and a goat's skin for the mill-stone. The daughter of Khadija, the queen of Arabia, whose wealth was so liberally distributed to the poor and needy and spent in the cause of Islam, marches from the father's house to the husband's residence, in her new costume, accompanied with the poor dowry, when a beggar passing by cries 'O daughter of the generous Prophet! thy marriage is being celebrated while my wife is at home without clothing.'

Fatima, the emblem of virtue, moved by this appeal made to her mercy, orders the band of her lady associates to raise a curtain round her. She sits down, removes her new jacket, puts on the old one and generously bestows the other on the poor beggar. The next day the father goes to see his daughter in the son-in-law's house and, finding her in the old garb, questions her as to what became of the new jacket. 'I remember' replies Fatima, without the least frown, 'that, when a miserable wretch complained to you in the mosque of his inability to purchase clothing, you wrapped your body with the carpet of the mosque and mercifully granted him the dress you had on. Your daughter followed in your foot-steps and gave her new jacket to one complaining of his wife's need.'

Now to turn back to our story, the Prophet was not allowed to enjoy peace of mind even after his emigration. His enemies headed by Abu Sufian made several attempts to attack and slay him and all those who had embraced.

his faith. Badr and Ohad were among the sanguinary battles fought by the Prophet either to revenge the wrongs done by the Meccan Quraishis or to defend Islam and its adherents against angry attacks of the desperate inhabitants of Mecca. The results of these battles were indecisive, but still they created awe in the minds of the Prophet's opponent, who were now convinced of his growing power and could not think lightly of him. Hamza, a valiant soldier and related to Muhammad as an uncle, fell in the field of Ohad in trying to save the Prophet, who narrowly escaped through Ali's valour and skill as a warrior.

The battle of the Ditch (so named because the Prophet had dug a ditch to safeguard his partisans against the numerically superior enemy), fought in the fifth year Hijiri, dealt a severe blow to the infidels of Hedjaz. The Quraishis of Mecca and the neighbouring Jews were baffled in their united attempt to overthrow Muhammad's power at Medina, under circumstances which added to the acuteness of their disappointment. The Quraishis were badly crushed and the Jews terribly harried and finally cast out; and there seemed to be no great impediment to the extension of Muslim power. The success with which the battle was attended lay chiefly in the fatal wound which Amr bin Abdi-Wad, an unexcelled warrior and wrestler of Arabia, received at the hands of Ali.

Several skirmishes followed 'The battle of the Ditch' and all helped to establish the Muslim supremacy and to ruin the opponents' prestige.

Then Muhammad's attention was directed towards the Jews of Khaibar, who, proud of their strongly fortified position, were maliciously setting up Bedewins against Muhammad and his co-religionists. Khaibar lies at four days' journey to the north-east of Medina. The land is

smiling and fertile and is dotted here and there with small forts to guard it against the predatory attacks of lawless plunderers. Muhammad's strong army marched in triumph capturing fort after fort on its way, and finally laid siege to the strong fort known as Khamoos. Built on a lofty hill and surrounded by a ditch, it was considered invincible. The siege continued for thirty-nine days. Column after column was ordered to march and capture it. But to the greatest disappointment of the Prophet they all retreated in disorder and confusion. Even Abu Bakr and Omar took the banner in turn and shared the same fate. The continued reverses proved the importance of Ali's presence at such critical hours, for to his military skill and valour all previous successes were chiefly due. Ali was now indisposed with sore eyes and was lying in the camp, with a heart burning at the constant retreats of the Muslim forces. The Prophet of Allah announced in the evening 'I shall grant this banner tomorrow to one who loves God and His Prophet and whom they love in return. He knows no retreat but is sure to conquer the invincible fort by his repeated attacks.' The fortieth day dawned and all the Moslems were gazing at the Prophet with expectant eyes, when the prevailing silence was broken by a query of the Prophet. 'Where is my brother Ali?' asked Muhammad of the overwhelming crowd round him. 'He is laid up with sore eyes' responded Sulman, a Persian Moslem, 'and is not in a position to face the field.' 'Fetch him immediately' was the subsequent order given to Sulman by the Prophet of Allah. Ali then comes, leaning on Sulman's shoulder. The Prophet miraculously cures his eyes with his spittle, and gives him the banner. Ali with his wonderful skill crosses the ditch, kills 'Marhab' the giant-like Jew and his brother and breaks open the fort. Behind him the Muslim forces cross over

the bridge laid by Ali by throwing the weighty door of the fort over the ditch and take complete possession of the stronghold.

In the eighth year Hijri, Muhammad made a successful attempt to establish his domination over the 'Mother of the cities.' His partisans, the Khazaites, were once ridiculed and attacked by the Kannana Quraishis. The afflicted members of the former tribe approached the Prophet's presence singing bitterly of their hardships and cringing for help. Muhammad secretly prepared for an invasion of Mecca and, to the astonishment of the Meccans, he was down upon them with overwhelming numbers. Abu Sufian, the leader of the Omiades who had long been the Prophet's most inveterate enemy, came trembling with awe and shame and declared his acceptance of the new faith, ostensibly with sincerity but in fact most reluctantly. The same was the case with other Omiades, as they found no other alternative to save their lives. With prophetic generosity and kindness, Muhammad spared their lives and announced that, if the Meccans restricted themselves to the four walls of their houses and kept their doors closed, they would not be molested; persons at the 'Kaaba,' engaged in worship, would not be meddled with, provided they were unequipped with weapons. Muhammad's stately march through the streets of Mecca was marked with the greatest simplicity. He entered the 'Kaaba' and commenced the work of destroying idols. Two of them, Hubal and Uzza, considered as the most powerful and sacred and able to change human destinies, had been located over the 'Kaaba' and Muhammad's moderate size was an impediment to their destruction. Ali was ordered to mount on the Prophet's shoulders and give a finishing stroke to the idolatry of Mecca by throwing down and smashing them to atoms.

The prophet then sent his mighty armies in various directions to subdue the remaining parts of Arabia which he thought were a source of hindrance in the free propagation of Islam, with the result that, within two more years, the whole of Arabia was at his feet ready to give its life at his command and to face any nation however strong and skilled it might be, if it resisted the sacred message of the Apostle of God. He wrote letters to the rulers of various countries inviting them to join him in his belief in monotheism and rejection of other deities.

The infidels that had come under Islamic protection did not abide by the terms dictated to them by the Prophet and were at the time of pilgrimage violating the bonds once accepted by them. The Prophet, irritated at this news, despatched Abu Bakr to read out a proclamation stating that the Moslems and their Prophet were no longer bound to protect those idolators and misbelievers, as they had now broken their pledges, and that, after the lapse of the forbidden months, the Islamic sword would be unsheathed to efface the idolators from the earth's surface. Abu Bakr accompanied by 300 pilgrims was on his way, when a revelation of the utmost gravity was made to Muhammad, commanding him to send Ali to read out the proclamation at Mecca, as the Prophet's duties could never be discharged but by one from among his kinsmen. Ali hurried to overtake Abu Bakr, took the command for the pilgrims from the latter in spite of his protests and announced the Divine proclamation in the midst of the myriads of pilgrims at the Kaaba.

The Apostle of God showed no less enthusiasm in dictating laws for the improvement of human culture, mental and moral. As a monarch, he set a noble example in raising the standard of subject classes and to endear them to rulers like their own children. In the capacity

of a father, he drew up a code of regulations binding the parents and children with a common cord, giving the former a superior position in virtue of their age and labours for the maintenance and upkeep of the latter. As a husband, he was suited to enumerate the duties of husband and wife. As a member of society, his practical teachings formed a complete volume, for the inculcation of social principles among men. Above all, his teachings to seek fellowship with the Almighty and finally to annihilate the particular unreal self in the All-pervading self, clearly prove his perfection and fully justify the title of the all perfect man and the Representation of One that is All in All. He had completed the machinery of Islam and had just set it at work, when he was given the choice of either continuing to remain a monarch and Prophet on earth or of returning to the 'Existing One' from whom his existence had emanated. The Prophet accepted the second alternative and prepared to perform a farewell pilgrimage to Mecca. He publicly announced the resolution, in different parts of Arabia and commanded the Moslems to be present at the Kaaba on the appointed day of the sacred month. Since his emigration he had not performed a single pilgrimage. When his presence was needed at Mecca to read the proclamation about his severing all relations with the idolators, he despatched Abu Bakr and subsequently Ali for the purpose, when he received the injunction that his undertakings should be discharged by himself or by Ali. He reserved his appearance at the pilgrimage for some graver and more important occasion. This time, a huge number of pilgrims gathered at Mecca from various quarters of Arabia and the Prophet finding this to be the best opportunity to give expression to his ideas, in accordance with Divine Orders mounted on his camel 'QASVA' and wherever

he found Muslim gatherings he passed through them declaring : 'Perhaps this is the last year of my life ; I may not attend the next pilgrimage : I leave among you two successors, (1) the book of God, a cord between man and God and (2) my house people the interpreters of the book. They will never separate from each other until they return to me at the cistern of "KOUSAR"¹. If ye follow these, ye will never go astray from the right path.' On another occasion, he held the door of the Kaaba and proclaimed to all that passed through it. 'The people of my house (Ahlul Baith) are like Noah's Ark. He that enters it is safe and he that rejects it shall be drowned.'

When the pilgrimage was over, Muhammad and his followers started for their homes and, on the eighth day after the pilgrimage, they all reached a place called Khum where two roads intersected. It was here that the Muslims had to bid farewell to the Prophet and proceed in different directions to reach their native villages. The above general enunciation of the Prophet was particularised here. A lofty pulpit was prepared and the Prophet got upon it accompanied by Ali. He reminded the assembly of what he had done for them saying 'From a set of warring tribes have I not raised you to a civilised nation and from idolators to worshippers of one true God ? Am I not your master and a better controller of your affairs than your own selves ?' 'Yes' the unanimous cry responded 'You have been an excellent prophet to us. Verily you are our master and a better controller of our affairs than we ourselves.' Three times he repeated these words and three times he got the same reply from the crowd. He then held Ali by the hand and said 'Ali is the master and controller of the affairs of every one whose

¹ A cistern of good and delicious fluid in Paradise.

master and controller I am.' Then the Prophet lifted up his hands and prayed 'O Lord! I have conveyed Thy commandments to thy servants. Be Thou a friend to Ali's friends and a foe to his foes. Help those who help him and frustrate the hopes of those who betray him.'

It is generally supposed that the Prophet left the world without nominating any one for his vicegerency. This supposition is based on a mistaken apprehension of facts and amounts to accusing the Prophet of a very irresponsible discharge of duty, for leaving such a huge and onerous machine behind him without any one to work it, and of being the cause of a number of dissensions and disunions among the followers whom he loved so dearly. Such baseless suppositions vanish in the presence of the facts mentioned above, which are noted down by authors, both Shia and Sunni and which leave little doubt as to the Prophet's indication of a successor to manage the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Muslim commonwealth after his demise. To err is human and erring humanity cannot choose a Prophet for its guidance. God appoint his own Prophets for the guidance of the world and in the same way, the Prophet nominated his successor in obedience to Divine orders. Muhammad was no exception to the rule and he did all in his power to establish Ali's authority over his followers, in spite of much opposition and criticism from those whom Ali's sword had reduced to submission or who had accepted Islam for worldly purposes and waited the death of the Prophet for the success of their evil designs.

Muhammad reached Medina and a month after his return he began to feel the effects of the poison given him by a Jewess at Khaibar, which was slowly penetrating his system. He felt that his end was approaching fast. He noted among his followers a sense of animosity towards Ali

and, with a view to keep all suspects at a safe distance, he despatched an expedition against the Romans under Osama, son of Zaid, with the warning 'Cursed be he who turns back from the ranks of Osama.' Ayesha who had long been nursing wrath against the son-in-law of Khadija, and Hafsa, another wife of the Prophet, managed to get back their fathers Abu Bakr and Omar. Each tried to arrange the Prophet's succession in favour of her own father. Once the Prophet heard that Abu Bakr was presiding at the mosque in the usual service under instructions from Ayesha. He immediately called Ali and Fazl, son of Abbas, and started for the mosque with his hands round their necks. Though feeble and unable to walk, he entered the mosque, dragging his feet, and bade his attendants take him to the arch where Abu Bakr was leading the prayers. The Prophet could not stand and therefore performed his worship sitting, Abu Bakr and other Muslims following him. He then wanted to address the Muslims, but could not do so as his feeble voice was lost in the noise of the crowd. He returned home with an increased temperature and could never afterwards appear in public congregations. He spent his last days in calmness and serenity of mind. He was at times advising Ali and Fatima to suffer all worldly misfortunes patiently and to resign themselves to the will of the Almighty, if any calamity befell them, for patience alone deserves the greatest reward in the world to come. He enquired about Fatima's children Hasan and Husain saying 'Where are the Roses of my Garden?' and when they approached him he kissed them and wept predicting their misfortunes. The 28th day of Safar of the eleventh year Hijri saw the noblest soul ever created, coming to rest in the midst of his loving Ahlul-Baith and Fatima weeping over the irreparable loss of her dear father. Thus the world lost

the only person noted in History who was at once a prophet, philosopher and law-giver, the founder of a religion and an empire and who lifted his followers within a period of ten years to a height which other nations could not aspire to reach with the hard labours of centuries.

Ali, along with other members of Ahlul-Baith (the house people of the Prophet) was then engaged in the obsequies, while the Omiades and a few others hurried to the Saqifai Bani Saïda, a place seven miles away from Medina, to discuss secretly who should succeed the Prophet, in spite of the fact that the choice of the Prophet, in accordance with Divine orders, had been, on more than one occasion, proclaimed. When they returned, they could only see the grave of the Prophet made in his own house at Medina.

CHAPTER III

HUSAIN'S BOYHOOD

THE information given in the first two chapters is, I believe, sufficient to make the reader understand who Ali and Fatima were. The former, a son of Abu Talib, Muhammad's guardian and strongest refuge in all his calamities, was the first to rush to the Prophet's assistance on the day the divine mission was proclaimed, and received the title of brother and caliph. Ali's perfection in the various aspects of life creates in every student of Saracenic history a heart-felt reverence and sincere admiration for him. In the battle-field, he is found to display unique military skill moving to and fro with extreme agility and killing the opponents of Islam and facing dauntlessly and slaying even Amr and Merhab, the champions of the age. On the other side his literary productions in the shape of addresses, psalms, proverbs and parables reveal in him the combined attributes of David, Solomon and Jesus. In acute agony, which an arrow transfixed in one of his heels was causing, he stands for devotional service and is engaged in supplication with such concentrated attention that a surgeon pulls out the arrow at the bidding of the Prophet, but he is not aware of it. After finishing the prayer he finds, to his astonishment, the prayer-carpet stained with fresh blood and learns from the Prophet that he took advantage of Ali's absorption in prayer and caused the arrow to be removed. At the dead of night, Ali is found walking through the streets of Medina, distributing bread and dates among widows and orphans and soothing those ailing.

Such a being matched with Fatima, the embodiment

of all that is divine in woman, must produce gems of extraordinary lustre. The first son of Ali and Fatima was born on 15, Ramzan 3 A.H. Before the period of confinement, Muhammad was out on religious duty, after advising his daughter not to give milk to the child, if born before his return. But, due to prolonged absence of the Prophet after delivery, she had to give milk to the baby. After his return, the Prophet learnt this and insisted that no milk should be given on any account to a second child, if born during his absence.

On 3, Shaban 4 A.H., Fatima gave birth to another son while her father was away on a tour. Three days passed and no traces of the Prophet could be seen. The child was about to die of starvation, when suddenly he appeared and with a cheerful smile lifted up the grandson in his lap and inserted his own tongue in the child's mouth who sucked it to his satisfaction as if honey was issuing from it.

Muhammad named his first grandson Hasan and the second Husain, after the names of the first two sons of Aaron, Shabar and Shubair, which in Hebrew bear the same significance as Hasan and Husain in Arabic.

There are only three persons noted in Islamic History who were born after six months' pregnancy of their mothers and survived. They were John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and Husain and the resemblance among these three saintly personages is manifest to one who goes through their lives.

Husain had no other diet in his infancy except the milk of his mother. At times, he was seen sucking the Prophet's tongue or thumb. Some of the wives of the Prophet state that they saw Fatima in Ali's house turning the mill-stone with one hand and the beads of rosary with the other, while Hasan and Husain hung to her breast.

On another occasion, she was noticed swinging the cradle of Husain and repeating this lullaby :—

Thou resemblest my father
And not Ali, thine own father.

Muhammad's love for Hasan and Husain knew no bounds. Once, he was seated in the mosque. Husain came running and fell down into the grandfather's lap and began playing with his beard passing his fingers through it. Rejoiced at the child's action, Muhammad began to kiss him and prayed to the Lord saying 'I love him and beg Thee also to love him.'

On another occasion, when Muhammad is engaged in prayer, Hasan and Husain approach him. Sometimes, they go round him when he stands up and, when he lies prostrate, they climb over his back and neck. After Muhammad finished the service, a certain man standing by criticised the action of the boys. But Muhammad with a frown rebuked him saying 'Whoever respects not his elders and loves not his youngsters is not one of us.'

One day, while sitting among his associates, the Prophet asserted 'I do not find any room in my heart for Hasan and Husain.' One of those present said 'O Prophet of Allah! How can these words be true when we have seen thee sometimes kissing thy grandsons sometimes carrying them on thy shoulders. When they got mounted on thy back in thy prostration at the time of prayers thou didst not raise up thy head until they got down.' 'I love these' answered the Prophet, 'not because they are my grandchildren but because they are beloved of God.'

Once Hasan and Husain got ill. Ali and Fatima made a vow that, if the sons recovered, they would fast for three consecutive days. When the boys regained their health, Ali and Fatima began their period of abstemiousness...

Hasan and Husain joined their parents in their fast. Fizza, a slave-girl brought up in the house, had to follow the holy family in their religious duty. The first day passed. The holy family along with the slave-girl sat after their evening prayer to break their fast each with a loaf. But, suddenly, they heard a voice from the door 'I am a poor Moslem and had nothing to eat the whole day. Failing to get a loaf at other doors I have come to one from where none returns disappointed.' Ali took his loaf and handed it over to the beggar. Then Fatima, Hasan and Husain followed the example of Ali. Fizza could not withhold her share and satisfy her hunger when Hasan and Husain had to spend the night in starvation.

The second day of fasting also ended with no better result. Just like the previous evening the members of the holy family were about to begin their dinner after two days of starvation, when another voice attracted them. Some one was crying at the door 'Holy people! Here stands a Moslem orphan having nothing to eat. Pray, grant me something to satisfy my hunger.' The scene of the previous night was repeated. All the inmates of the house gave away their shares to the afflicted one at the door.

The third and the most difficult day of fasting began, Hasan and Husain shivering with weakness. The day passed somehow. The sun went down the western horizon. The sky presented a crimson sight. Darkness began to prevail from the east. After prayers the Ahlul-Baith and the slave-girl sat to appease their pinching hunger. Even a morsel had not gone down their throats when they heard one crying 'I am a Moslem captive starving since dawn and none has been kind enough to grant me a loaf.' The holy saints, though about to die of starvation, could not bear to see one in such distress. Without a

frown, they dragged themselves to the door and handed over to him their loaves, in order that they might save his life in preference to their own.

The next morning Muhammad comes with the tidings that God has been so pleased with the self-sacrifice made by the Ahlul-Baith that He had revealed to him a verse commending their charitable act.

‘They fulfil the vow and, out of love for their Lord, they feed the miserable, the orphan and the captive.’

This and many other acts of like nature mark the pious lives of the Prophet’s family and convince one of their supernatural virtue and determination to serve humanity.

In the ninth year Hijri, a number of Christian priests from Najran came to Medina to enquire if Muhammad’s mission was really divine. After a short discussion with the Prophet, they agreed to bring their ladies and children along with themselves and Muhammad had to bring with him his own ladies and children to certain square in Medina. Both parties had to pray to God to send down His wrath on those who were liars and impostors. The next morning Muhammad was witnessed marching with Fatima behind him, Hasan and Husain on each side of her and Ali following her. The head priest of the Christians enquired who accompanied Muhammad. He was astonished to hear that Muhammad’s nearest kith and kin were with him. He collected the other priests and warned them saying ‘Do not contest with Muhammad. Had he been an impostor, he would never have brought his own daughter, son-in-law and grandsons to be exposed to divine wrath.’ The Christians refused to pray jointly, with Muhammad and his relations, for a divine curse on liars, and apologised to him for the trouble he had taken. They were convinced by what they saw; but they asserted they could not openly embrace Islam.

for political reasons. Muhammad treated them courteously and gave them a happy send off.

As to Husain's education in school or under any teacher, history is silent. The fact is that the Prophet and his twelve spiritual successors never attended any school or college, as there were none of these, in those days in that part of the world. Nor were they trained by any teacher at home. But the unbounded treasures of learning their addresses and writings disclose are a mystery to the world, and we can only decide according to their own statement, that they had a direct ray from the All Knowing Sun, through which everything they desired was revealed to them.

It is a popular belief that Hasan and Husain had been trained in the art of combat and soldiery by their father Ali whose military prowess has been acknowledged by his friends and foes. But we do not find any historical proof thereof. An episode is described in history which proves that Husain practised riding from his boyhood. Once, Husain was about to ride a horse, and Abdulla, son of Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet, was holding a stirrup to help the boy to mount. A passer by remarked 'O Abdulla! Why do you lower yourself in the eyes of the public by holding the stirrup for this boy.' Abdulla at once retorted 'Though young in age, Husain is superior to me, as the blood of the Prophet runs in his veins.'

One important fact that we desire to bring home to our readers is that Islam had a mysterious connection with Husain. Until Husain was born the Prophet's mission met with little success and he had to suffer defeats both in the battle-field and in propagating Islam. But the birth of Husain turned the tide of events. The battle of the 'Ditch' which settled the destiny of Arabia and resulted in a decisive victory of the Prophet, was fought

when Husain was a year old. As Husain grew, Islam developed and flourished until the whole of Arabia was at the feet of the Prophet when Husain reached his ninth year.

From the incidents quoted above, it can be stated without any fear of criticism that, as long as the Prophet was alive, Husain was respected both at home and abroad. His parents loved and respected him for his high character, his faithful adherence to the commandments of the Lord even in his youth and for the resemblance he had to the Prophet. The Prophet loved and honoured him for he was a beloved of God. When Muhammad, the all powerful man in the land, showed this consideration to Husain, his disciples, the Moslems, with whom the whole of the Arabian Peninsula now abounded, had to be respectful to Husain, some in right earnest and some at least to please the Prophet.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST RULERS OF THE ISLAMIC COMMONWEALTH

As to the Saqifai Bani Saida where the Omiades and some others had assembled to discuss the appointment of a successor, Islamic history records that it was a secret place where from time immemorial people used to conspire (Giasullughath). No sooner had the Prophet expired than one by one the people left Medina and marched towards the Saqifa, with what purpose the reader can understand. They did not even wait to see the Prophet buried but made haste in appointing a caliph, lest Ali should come to power. They took advantage of Ali's engagement, in the funeral ceremonies of the Prophet and tried to finish off their business during his absence. There was a hot discussion among those present at the Saqifa. The Mohajirin, emigrants from Mecca, and the Ansar, Medinite helpers, began to dispute. Each party wanted a caliph of their own. From words they came to blows. But Omar dexterously asked Abu Bakr, Ayesha's father, to stretch his hand and, when he did so, the former immediately took the oath of fealty to him; and sword in hand he persuaded many others to follow his example.

Abu Bakr and Omar along with their party marched through the streets of Medina, taking fresh oaths of allegiance and announcing the appointment. The party swelled little by little and reached the Baithul Mal (treasure house) and took possession of it. Then they

came to the mosque to declare the succession openly to those collected there.

When the meeting of the Saqifa was in full swing, Ali like a son of the Prophet, was engaged in the obsequies and cared little for what was going on outside. In one of his addresses, he says 'I washed the body of the Prophet with my own hands; and, after it was done, I sipped the water that had remained in the sockets of his eyes. The effect of this is that I never forget anything that I hear or see.'

The appointment of a successor and its announcement was done without the knowledge of the holy Ahlul-Baith about whom the Prophet had declared 'They are like the Noah's ark. He that enters it is safe and he that rejects it shall be drowned.' The Koran testifies to their purity and holiness. The Prophet had laboured hard to bring about a compromise between the materialistic laws brought by Moses and the spirituality taught by Jesus. Muhammad himself was at the head of both Church and State. But, as soon as his soul left the body, an attempt was made to deal a death-blow to his hard gained success. Power was shifted from its right centre and fell in the hands of one whose purity and infallibility cannot be proved either by the Koran or by the traditions of the Prophet. Thus the laws and regulations that had been established by the Koran and by the traditions of the Prophet, were now relegated to darkness. When the Ahlul-Baith found the precepts of the Koran and the doctrines laid down by the Prophet forgotten or voluntarily neglected, they chose to lead secluded lives. Ali, the head of the Hashimites, who inherited the trusteeship of the Kaaba from his father and the succession of the Prophet by right, limited himself to the four walls of his closet, leaving the world to the worldly.

Even here he was not left unmolested to enjoy a life of peace and comfort with uninterrupted devotion to his Creator. He was dragged, with threats, to the presence of Abu Bakr, where he was compelled to pay homage to the so-called Caliph. But he protested and argued his right to the Prophet's succession. Abu Bakr, fully convinced by Ali's argument, gave him his freedom, expressed his sorrow for his acceptance of the Caliphate and pleaded his ignorance of Ali's inclination to it. (Hadiqathul Ahbab and Abul Fida.) But, through Omar's instruction, he withheld for the Caliphate the possession of Fadak. Fadak was the Prophet's private estate of great revenue, which was bestowed upon Fatima in obedience to the Divine order 'O Prophet! hand over to thy relations their right.' (The Koran.)

This was another calamity which Hasan and Husain had to suffer. Their mother's property, the only source of their livelihood, was ruthlessly snatched away from their hands. Worldly wisdom was thus successful in turning away from the holy fountain of knowledge and sanctity myriads of such individuals as could only be attracted by a pittance; and the virtue of the holy family was left bare without any means of attraction for those absorbed in the abject desire of transitory wealth. Thus the Divine hunters had no bait to throw before wild beasts and birds to catch them in the Divine trap of religion. The Image of God was left in such darkness that only those who were endowed with extraordinary power of judging right from wrong and the real from the unreal could approach and follow the rightful vicegerent of the Prophet.

Ali in another address of his known as the Kutbai Shakhshakhia gave vent to his ideas in the following words, 'I perceived my own right, as ordained by God and his Prophet, had been usurped by those who could put

forward no claim to it. My eyes were full of tears as if dust had fallen in them. I meditated if I should bear the calamity patiently or should unsheath my sword. If I followed the first plan, the world would think that I was frightened of the Caliph's man power. If I chose the second alternative, Islam, which had not yet taken root, would easily have been eradicated and the people would consider that Ali was inclined towards worldly pomp. In obedience to the Prophet's dying words, I had to resign myself to the will of God and, as trained pigeons accompany the wild ones, I joined them in their flight. I went up as they did and came down along with them, so that I might guide them to the proper roosting.'

The notorious Abu Sufian, the most inveterate enemy of the Prophet, who, out of the mean fear of losing his own life, had hypocritically embraced Islam, now came forward to deal a serious blow to the Prophet's organisation. On the one side, he was of opinion that the Prophet's succession should be transferred to some house other than the Prophet's. He now comes to Ali and tries to induce him to launch a rebellion against Abu Bakr, saying 'Is it not a disgrace that the son of Khahafa should be all powerful in the land and we, the sons of Hashim and Omia, should lead lives of subjection and obedience? I shall fill the plains with soldiers to stand by you and charge your enemy, if you only care to crush him.'

Ali, with his usual magnanimity and self-less love for the prosperity of Islam and abhorrence for internal dissensions and breach of peace among those professing Islam, which he feared would ruin the tender rooted faith, bluntly refused the offer and rebuked his mischievous adviser saying 'As long as you were an infidel you used to create dissensions among the Arabs. Even after embracing Islam you adhere to your old nature.'

When Abu Sufian found that he could not realise his object in the person of Ali he joined the other party and later on secured the command of Islamic forces for his son Yezid. Other Omiades too found the field open for them to undermine the faith and organisation of Islam, which they were really indisposed to follow, as it had been built up by a Hashimite and as it was a great impediment to the free practice of their vices and the indulgence of their evil desires. But they were not in a position to throw off from their necks the yoke of Islam and to oppose openly the principles inculcated by the Prophet, since they thought the secret of success in their impious object lay in standing under the Islamic banner and wearing away the foundation of the true faith in the disguise of Moslems. They took advantage of Ali's seclusion and succeeded in attaining power and respect under the new caliphate.

As the opponents of the Prophet were paving the way for their political and financial supremacy the Ahlul-Baith were made to undergo various kinds of punishments. Fatima, the mother of Husain and daughter and only surviving child of the Prophet, was so much grieved with the treatment she received at the hands of her father's followers that she was obliged to repeat often a couplet which was the outcome of her extreme sorrow and heart-burning.

The couplet, which is invariably quoted by educationists and scholars of Arabic Literature for its beautiful construction and peculiar phraseology, cannot be properly translated to bring out its full sense and poetical beauty. For all practical purposes, it can be rendered in these words:—

‘Such calamities befell me as, if they had fallen on bright days, would have changed them into dark nights.’

On another occasion, the afflicted daughter of the Prophet sings her painful story in these words:—

‘Constant turning of the mill-stone has made my palms bleed.’

‘Constant drawing of water from the well has bent my spine.’

The demise of her father, the Prophet of Allah, and the turning away of his disciples from the holy family pained her seriously; while, the abortion of a child Mohsin, the causes of which are too pitiful and heart-rending to be mentioned, undermined her health. The loss of her property and frequent starvation hastened her end. Thus a short life attended with many prolonged misfortunes came to a sad end some seventy-five days after the Prophet’s demise. But some authors mention the period of her survival after the Prophet to be 6 months. Anyhow Husain and the remaining two members of the Ahlul-Baith had, within a short interval, the loss of two Godly Souls, not to speak of the worldly sufferings they were put to.

The presence of the daughter of the Prophet had compelled the generality of those who had come under the Islamic banner to show at least some regard for Ali. But, when she too was taken away, people were ready to oppose him openly. Such people found their attempts failed in the presence of Ali’s merits, capabilities and character. Many a man came to him to do harm to his person; but his courtesy, noble behaviour and bravery reduced the opponent to submission. Even the Caliph had to approach Ali for the solution of such political and religious problems as could not be tackled by ordinary heads. When envoys from the monarchs of various countries came to the Caliph’s court, he readily gave them an interview; but, when they asked him some religious

questions, he had to confess his ignorance and direct them to Ali, who satisfied them through his Divine wisdom and eloquence. When the Moslems asked the Caliph to explain any of the Koranic Verses, he would invariably say 'Leave me alone; I am not the best and most competent when there is Ali among you.'

In matters connected with the state, Abu Bakr often consulted Ali, who, without the slightest prejudice or grudge for the loss of his rights, was ready to help him with his sound and valuable advice, aiming thereby to preserve the form of Islam, in which he intended to inspire the soul of Godliness whenever an opportunity was afforded him.

The reign of Abu Bakr was destined to be short, as he was old and feeble. Some two years and six months after he assumed the reins of Government he expired. But, before his death, Omar managed to secure a written will from Abu Bakr, in which it was expressly stated that Omar should succeed him as Caliph. Here is the same Abu Bakr, who was convinced of Ali's rights to the Prophet's succession in preference to his own claims, now writing a will in favour of Omar and voluntarily depriving Ali of such rights as were exclusively his in accordance with Divine injunctions and Prophetic traditions, not to speak of his personal merits and character.

The method of appointing a successor was constantly changed in different times, with a view to keep the holy family from power and respect. Abu Bakr's appointment as Caliph was neither based on the principles of heredity and nomination nor on those of election. Abu Bakr had neither any close connection with the Prophet nor was he nominated by him to succeed. As to the question of election, no notice was served to the claimants, specially to the Hashimites, the members of the Prophet's family.

No votes were taken from those present at the Saqifai Bani Saida, nor was the decision arrived at by the majority of those that attended the meeting. It was Omar who, with his tact, secured the caliphate for Abu Bakr and thus Abu Bakr perhaps thought he was justified in writing a will appointing Omar as his successor.

History supplies very little information as to the engagements of Husain during the long reign of Omar. But the seclusion of Ali and his literary pursuits, which have supplied valuable treasures of knowledge to the world, can lead us to imagine that Hasan and Husain must have undergone during this period a course of training under their father. Ali certainly paid special attention to explain to them the interpretation of the Koran and the traditions in the true light. He also took particular care in forming the character of the noble youths by his personal example and effective oral teaching.

Though Husain's existence was so much ignored and neglected by the state, still history records one or two incidents of great importance connected with him. One day Omar was delivering a sermon in the mosque of Medina, when Husain entered the religious building, which his grandfather had erected for the Moslems to worship in. He then sat on the pulpit by the side of Omar and arrested the attention of the audience by a few words addressed to Omar. 'O Omar!' said he 'get down from my father's pulpit and go to that of thy father.'

Omar confessing that his father had none inquired of Husain who taught him to address the Caliph in such a way. Husain admitted that he had not been taught by any one and said that it was the outcome of his personal knowledge and original thinking. Thereupon the Caliph asked Husain to see him at his residence. Husain went there the next day, but was refused admission by the

Caliph's son, Abdullah, who stood at the gate and said that his father was engaged with Moawiah, a son of Abu Sufian, in a private talk. This incident throws a flood of light on the daring character of the dauntless youth, who, depressed as he was, was not in the least afraid to criticise the Caliph's right to the pulpit, direct to his face. It is also manifest that the Omiades used to visit the Caliph every now and then and converse on topics, the leakage of which for the information of the Hashimites was carefully guarded against.

Omar's reign is well known for the expeditions he sent against Persia and Egypt and the success with which they were attended. The Arabs, who had long had a military spirit and had been utilizing it in plunder and civil war, were now collected and well organized by the Prophet for religious defence, self-protection and adopting retaliative measures against those who persecuted the Moslems. But, after his demise, the tide was turned in a different direction altogether. Hoards of such trained Moslems were despatched in various directions to add country after country to the Muslim kingdom.

The aim of the Prophet's mission was to collect those running astray and guide them along the Divine path. But, as the opposition demanded a well organized force, he had to maintain one. In course of time, the Prophet's enemies comprised not ordinary individuals with a few followers at their command, but chiefs and rulers of states with organised forces, with the result that the Prophet was compelled to face them with equal preparations and with equal might. Thus an empire was automatically formed for the maintenance and upkeep of Islam and Moslems with sufficient power and equipage to face even rulers and kings.

But, after his demise, the motive appears to have changed. The means turned into the end and we find

Moslem forces, though unprovoked, fighting far away in Persia, Egypt and other distant countries with a view to acquire fresh territory. It was for this reason that Ali, whose bravery and unsurpassed military skill is even to-day admitted both by his friends and foes and whose presence had won for the Prophet the most sanguinary battles, when Islam was in its very infancy, now kept himself aloof from these expeditions, that were sent in the name of Islam. He took part in no battle as he thought the aim of such battles was not Godly and as he looked down upon unprovoked aggression as impious and irreligious. Even at the time of the Prophet, when he had to face an enemy in a single combat, he refused to initiate the fight by attacking first. In the Battle of the Ditch, when the giant-like Amr bin Abdi-Wad asked Ali to begin the combat, the latter refused saying 'The aggressor is an oppressor and God will surely see the oppressor defeated. I should not like to enroll myself in the list of oppressors. Thou shalt attack first and I will reply.'

Among the expeditions sent by Omar, the one against Yezdagard, the Shah of Persia and son of the world-renowned Nowsheerwan the Just, is a case in point. The Moslem forces despatched in the year 23 A. H. to conquer Persia returned successful with immense booty and a number of Persian captives. Among them was Shai-zenan, otherwise known as Shahr Banu, a daughter of Yezdagard, the last Zoroastrian monarch of Persia.

She was brought to the court of Omar along with other captives. The noble princess, that had been brought up in the palace of a most civilized monarch, felt ashamed and distressed to stand before the Arab Caliph and other chiefs of a country which was barbarous and uncultured in her opinion. She began, in her own language, cursing her own throne and monarchs who had not slaughtered

her to save her from such an evil doom. The Caliph who could not understand Persian, supposing that she was abusing him, got irritated and ordered that she should be sold at the public market. But Ali, who happened to be there, protested against the Caliph's announcement, explained to him the princess' words and suggested in an emphatic tone that she should be permitted to make the choice of a husband, as princesses could never be sold like ordinary captives.

When the Caliph found Ali to be against him, he yielded and allowed her to choose a husband from among those present. Ali served as an interpreter in explaining to the captive princess what the Caliph had said. Shahr Banu cast a princely glance on each individual in the audience. She found among them but one face lovely, noble, religious and more than a match for the daughter of the Emperor of a country famous in every age for its civilization, culture and nobility. She came behind that noble personality and to indicate her choice of a husband placed her hands on his shoulders. Lo! It was Husain whom the daughter of Yezdagard and granddaughter of the famous Nowsheerwan had selected as her bridegroom. Ali performed the Nikah and handed over the princess to Husain saying 'Take her home; trust and honour her as God has destined to make her the mother of enlightened souls for the guidance of the world.'

'The History of Damascas' deals in detail with the distressed condition of all living beings during a certain year in the reign of Omar owing to the failure of the seasonal rains and the consequent famine. The Caliph requested Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet, to arrange somehow for a prayer by the holy family. At the request of Abbas, Ali, Hasan and Husain started from their holy residence, with Abbas and other Hashimites behind them.

‘O Omar!’ cried Abbas to the Caliph, ‘Let all non-Hashimites keep themselves separate from us.’ Then the uncle of the Prophet prayed to God saying ‘O Allah! we have put forward the holy Ahlul-Baith and pray to Thee for mercy and a shower.’ The prayer was not finished, when clouds began to collect overhead and a heavy shower began to set in and all those who had come to witness the holy family offering prayers went home with wet clothes.

Omar’s long reign of over ten years was brought to a close by Fairuze, otherwise known as Abul Lulu, who struck a dagger in the Caliph’s abdomen cutting thereby some of his intestines. The injured Caliph understood that his end was approaching fast and hence thought it his duty to make arrangements for a successor, though, according to his own statement, the Prophet was not so wise in this respect. Abu Bakr had explicitly put his finger on the name of Omar though, according to his opinion, the Prophet lacked the wisdom to make arrangements for the control of the Islamic commonwealth after his demise. Now Omar adopted a third course. He appointed an arbitration comprising six members for the election of a Caliph. These six were :—Abdur Rahman Bin Auf, Saad bin Waqqas, Thalha, Zobier, Osman and Ali. He had also stated that, if the arbitration be equally divided, the words of the division containing Abdur Rahman Bin Auf should be obeyed. To put it in the modern phraseology, Abdur Rahman was allowed a casting vote. This Abdur Rahman was a son-in-law of Osman. Saad bin Waqqas was a cousin of Abdur Rahman. Thalha and Zobier were persons who, in after years, persuaded Ayesha to launch a rebellion against Ali and thus gave proof of their secret hostility towards the son-in-law of the Prophet in the battle of the ‘Camel’ fought between Ayesha and Ali.

Thus it was clear that Ali could have no chance even this time and the arbitration was only formed to appoint Osman as the succeeding Caliph, for there could not but be a majority for Osman.

The last of the rules framed by Omâr for the guidance of the arbitration to elect a Caliph was very detrimental to Ali. It was stated that, if any one out of the six differed from the decision of the arbitration, his head should at once be severed. Ali had either to submit to the decision of his opponents or lose his head.

Before we close the brief account of the reign of Omar as connected with the Ahlul-Baith or the Prophet's holy family, we have also to consider the state of the Omiades during this period. The Omiade power had been seriously damaged during the time of the Prophet, as their existence was a great impediment to the propagation of Islam. But they spared no pains in recouping their lost strength during the reigns of the first two Caliphs. Specially in Omar's time, the facilities for their progress were greatly enhanced. Many of the important posts in the Government service were now occupied by them. Yezid, a son of Abu Sufian, the leader of the infidel army that fought against the Prophet in Badr and Ohad, was first appointed as commander of the Moslem forces and then raised to the Governorship of Syria. When he died, his brother Moawiah succeeded him. Syria thus became the seat of Omiade activities. Last but not the least, the arrangements for the installation of Osman, an Omiade, to the Caliphate raised the Omiades to the Zenith of their aspirations. One acquainted with the character of the Arabs, their tendency to loosen the religious bonds, their infirmity of faith, their love for plunder and money and their inclination towards immorality can easily infer that Arabia, under the undisputed sovereignty increased of the

Omiades would return with speed to its original irreligiosity and impiety.

After the death of Omar, four out of the six members comprising the arbitration sat, excluding Ali and Osman ostensibly to discuss the capabilities of Ali and Osman, but in fact to devise some plan to bar Ali from reaching a position which was exclusively his. They talked and discussed and at last hit upon a good plan. They came to Ali and inquired if he was willing to accept the caliphate on three conditions. He had to act in accordance with the precepts of the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet and to follow the foot-prints of the first two Caliphs. The Bayard of Islam accepted the first two and rejected the third, saying that he would rather act on his own discretion than follow his predecessors. The four members then went to Osman and offered to make him the Caliph on the same three conditions. Osman readily accepted the conditions and was appointed as Caliph and ruler of the Islamic world.

As soon as the Omiades found that a member of their tribe had occupied the topmost position so frantically desired by them, they all flocked to him. Merwan, a cousin of Osman, had been expelled by the Prophet from Medina for having wilfully disclosed some of the State secrets. The first two Caliphs had sent him each ten miles farther from the Muslim Capital owing to his mischievous nature. He was now called by the Caliph Osman and the keys of the Baith-ul-Mal, the Caliph's Seal and all the other things which ought to have been in the custody of the Caliph were handed over to him.

When the Caliph found his lofty position secure, he began showing special favours to the members of his own tribe. He re-called all non-Omiade governors of the various provinces and appointed Omiades in their places.

The greedy governors who were newly appointed began to squeeze as much wealth as possible from their subjects. When complaints were made to the Caliph, he turned a deaf ear to them. He constructed a grand palace for his residence and lived a luxurious life. When there were no posts to be filled by the Omiades, he gave lavish presents to them. Once Abu Suffian praised the Caliph and advised the Omiades to retain with as much force as possible the monarchy of Arabia and its dependencies in their own tribe and pass it on like a ball from one to the other, as there was no hell or heaven, no accountability or Day of Judgment. The Caliph instead of punishing him for this most blasphemous statement, made him a present of two lakhs of gold coins from the Baith-ul-Mal.

Other Omiades too copied the example of the Caliph in building marble palaces and in living lives of luxury and pomp. The various departments cried for redress. The subjects of different provinces raised their voices against the oppression of their respective governors and sent representatives to the Caliph. The complainants were severely punished instead of being patiently heard.

The compilation of the Koran was completed during Osman's Caliphate and copies were distributed in every nook and corner of the Islamic world with the order that every other copy of the holy book should be burnt up.

Thus the eleven years and eleven months of Osman's reign was a period of mismanagement and chaos. People were disgusted with the oppressive nature of the Omiade rule and fostered a rebellious spirit. The silence was suddenly broken when a number of representatives from Egypt, Kufa and Bassorah went to Medina, entered the mosque and began openly criticising the Caliph and the Governors appointed by him. Ali rebuked the insurgents saying that the course adopted by them was neither wise

nor polite. He advised them to see the Caliph and explain to him their grievances. They went and surrounded the palace of the Caliph and asked him a few questions, but the reply did not satisfy the rebels. When the insurgents were about to attack the palace, Osman sent word to Ali to intervene and bring the dispute to an amicable settlement. He also sent a messenger to Moawiah to help him at that critical juncture. Moawiah cunningly evaded the order and asked the Caliph to leave Medina for good and settle in Syria where he thought people were more loyal. Ali arrived at the spot and settled the dispute most wisely. The Caliph had to recall the mischievous Governors and to replace them by better men. Muhammad, son of Abu Bakr, was appointed the Governor of Egypt in the place of Abdulla bin Sa'ad who was dismissed. An agreement for the fulfilment of the above pledges was signed by the Caliph with an oath in the name of God and with Ali as witness. An order was written to Abdulla bin Sa'ad to hand over charge of the Egyptian Government to Muhammad bin Abu Bakr. The Egyptian representatives were satisfied with this appointment and proceeded to their homes with the newly appointed Governor accompanying them. On their way, they saw an Abyssinian slave of Osman mounted on the Caliph's camel going hastily past them. They suspected some mischief and searching him and his luggage found a letter written under Osman's seal. It was written by the same clerk of the Caliph that had written the order appointing Muhammad bin Abu Bakr as Governor of Egypt. The wording of the letter was the same as that contained in the order except that instead of the expression 'Receive or welcome Muhammad bin Abu Bakr and his companions,' 'Behead Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr and his companions.' The Arabic word 'Uqbulhu' meaning

accept him is written in the same way as 'Uqthulhu' which means behead him. Only the dots, of the letters representing the b and th sounds, distinguish the two words. The Egyptians got wild at this duplicity and hastened back to Medina where the representatives of other provinces were still lingering. The letter was publicly read out with great excitement. The infuriated mob ran to the Caliph's palace and surrounded it. When the Caliph asked them the cause of their fury, they showed him the letter and asked him to see if it was his seal on it. They also asked him to state whose slave it was that carried the letter and on whose camel he was riding. The Caliph admitted that the seal, the slave and the camel were his and that the writing resembled that of his own clerk. But he denied all knowledge of the letter and its contents. The insurgents offered him two alternatives, either to forfeit the caliphate or to hand over Merwan to them, as he was supposed to have been at the bottom of the mischief.

The Caliph rejected both the alternatives and the excited mob began attacking the palace. For three full days the Caliph and his dependants were in great straits, as they allowed no water to be carried to his palace. He suddenly peeped out of his balcony and inquired if Ali was there. Some of his friends outside responded that Ali was nowhere near. He then asked them to go to Ali and tell him that the Caliph had been without water for three full days. On hearing this, Ali sent a few pitchers of water by the Hashimites accompanied by Hasan and Husain. The insurgents dared not prevent the valiant sons of Hashim from helping an Omiade at such a critical time.

After this was done, a furious attack commenced on the Caliph's palace. In a loud voice, the Caliph was reminded of his maltreatment of the Prophet's companions, Ammar

and Abuzar, of the punishment meted out to the innocent representatives of the provinces, of the destruction by fire of the copies of the holy book, of the special favours he showed to his own tribesmen and of the duplicity displayed in the case of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr and his Egyptian companions. Some of the rebels mounted a wall of the palace and entered the room, where he was reciting the Koran. A curtain was hanging by. A sword forcibly fell on the Caliph's head cutting along with it the fingers of his wife Naila who had stretched out her hands from the curtain to save her husband from the blow.

It is beyond our province to deal with this subject more elaborately. Suffice it to say that Merwan, the mischief-monger, and Noman bin Basheer somehow made their escape carrying with them the blood stained shirt of the Caliph and the severed fingers of his wife Naila. They stitched the fingers to the shirt and roamed about with these in the streets of several towns and villages of Arabia, maliciously setting the illiterate masses against Ali saying that he had brought about the cruel slaughter of the Caliph.

The body of the Caliph was left on the public square and was grossly dishonoured and insulted by his enemies. Ali urged that it should be interred. Finally it was buried in a Jewish cemetery, as the Muslim grave-yards were refused to him. In course of time, the Jewish cemetery was expanded and connected with 'Baqee,' the Moslem burial-ground of Medina.

Thus ended the long reign of about twelve years of the first Omiade Caliph, which left the whole Moslem world in a chaotic and disorderly condition. European authors portray him as a weak and impotent monarch rendered unfit by old age to rule over such a vast dominion. According to their statement, he did not know how to

begin his sermon when he was placed in the pulpit. But he is praised as a kind and charitable gentleman devoted to prayers. The Omiade resoluteness, he displayed at the last hour, in not handing over Merwan, and refusing to forfeit the Caliphate, are sufficient grounds to prove his firmness of mind. But his firmness was of an Omiade type and his charity confined to his own tribe.

Thus the Moslem world realised, though too late and at a great cost, the consequences of shifting power from its right centre. Deviation from the right path is not perceptible at the outset but lands one in a thorny forest, deliverance from which is either impossible or extremely difficult.

CHAPTER V

ALI AT THE HEAD OF THE MOSLEM COMMONWEALTH

THE Muslim Commonwealth was now without a ruler. Chaos and lawlessness prevailed everywhere. The relations between the Governors and subjects of various provinces were so strained that dissensions were rife in every quarter of Arabia. The former tried to squeeze out as much wealth as possible; the latter were planning to cast off the yoke of such oppressive Governors. Bribery was freely practised in every department. There was a time when the Caliph's seat was considered to be a bed of roses; but now no one would come forward to occupy the risky position. The Mohajirin were consulted if any of them would assume the reins of the Government. The people were ready to give a chance to the Ansar, if they were only willing. But no reply was forthcoming.

At last Ali was requested to assume the leadership of the Moslems. Ali refused and said 'Grant it to one who desires it and I will help him if he is in need of my assistance.' But Thalha and Zobier devised a plan to offer Ali the Caliphate in such a way that he might not refuse it. 'If you do not accept it to-day,' they said 'we will complain before God and His Prophet on the 'Day of Reckoning' that we requested you to guide us in the right path, but you left us astray in darkness and ignorance.' Having understood their motive. Ali replied 'Now like thirsty camels ye come to the clear fountain and wish to drink of it by force; but mind ye will not bear my hard and fast Government in accordance with divine orders, as

your minds have long been polluted with wordly desires. If ye really wish to follow the divine path under my guidance, assemble ye, not in front of my door but in the house of Allah, where I shall accept your oaths of allegiance.'

The whole mosque was soon crowded with the young and old of Medina, eagerly expecting Ali's appearance. The ladies of the adjacent houses, with veils on their faces, and many others of different localities came near the mosque to observe their men-folk taking oaths of allegiance on the hand of the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet.

Suddenly, Ali entered the mosque and stood on a step of the pulpit leaning on his bow. There was a rush towards him of the Moslems of Medina and the representatives of the various provinces stretching their hands to swear allegiance to the true vice-gerent of the Prophet. The old and feeble were trampled and the young were shrieking aloud due to the pressure of the crowd making its way towards Ali.

Ali delivered a short speech on the occasion which began with these words:—'Praises and thanks to the Lord for his favour in returning the right to the rightful owner.' He then explained to the crowd in a loud tone of voice that he would follow the footsteps of the Prophet and would see no difference in Islam between the black and the fair and between the Arab and the Persian or Negro. If a section of the Moslems claimed to have accompanied the Prophet in battles and to have performed charitable deeds, he reminded them of the special favours promised to them by the Almighty on the 'Day of Judgment.' But here, in this world, he said all Moslems could claim equal treatment at his hands without regard to birth, colour, past deeds or relationship to himself.

The crowd dispersed and Ali took charge of the Baith-ul-mal. He found three lakhs of gold coins as surplus to be distributed among the Medinite Moslems, numbering a lakh of people. He invited them to receive their shares. With his own hands he distributed the three lakhs of coins giving three to each. A certain slave who had been emancipated that very morning, got an equal share of three coins. He took three coins for his own share and set apart three coins for each of his sons, Hasan and Husain.

As soon as this was done, there began a whisper in the various circles, criticising Ali for his equal treatment of the slaves and the free. Some considered it an insult to receive the money without any regard to their birth and past services in the propagation of Islam. Thalha and Zobier who were first to swear allegiance to him were first to criticise him, as they found his strict Government was averse to any favouritism.

On a certain evening, Thalha and Zobier came to Ali when he was looking into the accounts of the Baith-ul-mal. When they commenced their talk Ali at once put out the lamp and asked his slave Qambar to bring one from his house. Thalha and Zobier were offended by this and asked him the reason of his behaviour, as they thought it was an intentional insult. Ali explained to them that he could not allow the lamp of the Baith-ul-mal to burn for their private talk and thus waste the oil bought out of the public money. They returned home much disappointed at Ali's strict ideas about the Baith-ul-mal.

Ali was informed through his friends of the dissatisfaction that prevailed in every quarter of Medina because of his strictness, which he himself had predicted before accepting the Caliphate. One day, a party of the Medinites approached him and from among them one

Valeed bin Aqaba got up and said 'O father of Hasan ! (as Ali was often called by this name) we have all suffered great injuries at your hands. My father was killed by you in the battle of Badr. Our brother Osman was surrounded, the other day, and killed in his palace, but you never cared to save him from the clutches of his foes. A'as, the father of Saied, suffered death at your hands at Badr, though he was called 'The Bull of the Quraish,' in consideration of his huge form. When Hakam and his son Merwan were allowed by the Caliph Osman to return to and settle at Medina, you criticised the action of the Caliph and disclosed before him and all the courtiers the vices of the two deportees. Our oath of allegiance on your hand is therefore conditional. If you promise to allow us to enjoy the wealth we acquired at the time of Osman and to revenge the murder of the Caliph, we shall become your staunch supporters. Otherwise, we wish to leave for Syria and lead peaceful lives under Moawiah.'

'The injuries you suffered at my hands,' replied Ali, 'were God-sent, as my crusade in company with the Apostle of God was in obedience to divine command. As for the property you own, I am not authorised to excuse any one for misappropriating God's wealth. Lastly, you demand vengeance for Osman's blood ; but mind, I would have accomplished it that very day, if I had thought it my duty, and would not have delayed it till to-day. If you are afraid of me, I assure you that I have no personal grudge against anybody. If you desire to leave Medina, I will not hinder you from so doing.'

Then Ali's attention was turned towards the vicious Governors, to whose oppressive action, the chaotic and disorderly condition of affairs was chiefly due. He dismissed most of them and appointed better and God-

fearing people in their places. Thalha and Zobier, who had been already dissatisfied with Ali's equal distribution of the Baith-ul-mal and were irritated at his refusal to burn the lamp which was public property, now came to him with the request that they might be appointed as Governors of Kufa and Bassorah in the new era that was coming. Knowing their ill nature and passion after wealth, Ali wisely evaded their request and said 'I want intelligent men like you by my side for help and counsel.' They both, inferring from this statement that they were under perpetual exclusion from taking any part in the administration of the commonwealth, tried to join a counter-revolution in despair, so that they might open a new road to remove the proscription they thought they were under. They left for Mecca where Ayesha was staying. The dismissed Governors of the various provinces with their men and money joined Thalha and Zobier, as a result of their persuasions and lavish promises. Ayesha was exceedingly sorry to learn that the son-in-law of Khadija had come to power and said 'It would be easier for me to see the sky fall on earth than to see Hasan's father in the Caliph's seat.' Thus she too joined in the conspiracy that Thalha, Zobier and the dismissed Governors were making to overthrow Ali's prestige. The fact is that, when the Omiades found that by Ali's appointment they would be ruined and reduced to insignificance just as in the time of the Prophet, they all made a last effort to deal a death-blow to the Hashimite power that was just in ascendancy.

Ali was fully aware of the grand and luxurious life that Moawiah, the Governor of Syria, was leading at Damascus and the misappropriation he was making of God's wealth, as Ali used to call the public treasure. Ali was about to write an order of dismissal for Moawiah also, when a num-

ber of his (Ali's) friends, thinking the step taken to be hasty and derogatory to his prestige, begged him to put it off till he was powerful enough to face the enemies who were increasing every day in number. Ali's friends also explained to him about Moawiah's immense wealth and the mighty army at his command, which he had managed to collect on his own authority for grandeur and strengthening his own position at the cost of the public treasure, without the permission of the central authority. After some consideration, Ali replied that the only power he was afraid of was that of the Almighty, and that he cared naught for any other. He explained to them his delicate position saying 'If Moawiah commits a sin now, I will be held accountable before God, for I am the Caliph, and he is a Governor under me. If I dismiss him now that I have discovered his wrong doing, I will be free before God and will be no way responsible for his misdeeds, whether he accepts my order or not. I do not wish to be answerable for another's crimes and the only thing I desire in this world is to please God, no matter what it may cost and whoseever displeasure it may incur.' So saying he despatched a messenger with the order dismissing Moawiah from the governorship. But the only reply he got was a blank paper under a cover bearing Moawiah's seal and Ali's address. Ali predicted some mischief and soon after learnt of Moawiah's letters to Thalha and Zobier promising help against Ali and stating his readiness to install either of them as Caliph.

Thalha, Zobier and the deposed governors who had settled at Mecca consulted among themselves as to which place should be the centre of their activities. First, they resolved to strike at the root by marching towards Medina and launching a rebellion directly at a place where Ali was residing. But, afterwards, opinions differed and it

was suggested that they should make their way to Syria and take from Moawiah the promised support. This suggestion also failed and, in conclusion, they decided to leave for Bassorah where Thalha had a strong interest. Accordingly, a large number of soldiers mounted on horses and camels that were collected chiefly through the influence of Ayesha, started for Bassorah. On their way, the number swelled to several thousands, as revenge for Osman's blood was ostensibly declared to be the objective. The party reached a place called Howab, by which was flowing a rivulet of the same name. Suddenly, a number of dogs appeared and began to bark at Ayesha who was seated in a litter on a camel's back. She scented some danger and remembered the words of the Prophet who had warned her saying 'One of my wives will, one day, revolt against Ali, while he will be in the right. She will suffer a miserable defeat and, while marching to accomplish this evil deed, she will be barked at by dogs at a place called Howab. I fear, O Ayesha! this prediction may prove true in thy person.' In amazement, she enquired the name of the place she had reached. On learning that it was Howab, she refused to accompany Thalha and Zobier in their march against Ali. But, through bribery, they managed to make the inhabitants swear that the place was not Howab. Some historians say that this was the first solemn public lie that was uttered after the Prophet.

Somehow, the rebellious party reached Bassorah and, after a skirmish, the soldiers were able to capture the governor. The hair of his beard and eyebrows was torn out and, after a punishment of lashes, he was thrown into prison. When the news reached Medina, Ali appealed to the Moslems for help against those who had voluntarily broken the solemn pledges they had taken while swearing allegiance to him. But the appeals could not move the

Medinites and only as many as nine hundred stood under his banner. With a view to nip the rebellion in the bud and to arrest the enemy's march to Medina, every inch of which was sacred to him, Ali started to Bassorah with the small number he had at his command. Some more from Kufa and other places joined him on his way. He sent messengers to Thalha and Zobier asking them not to violate their pledges and not to create mischief after law and tranquillity had prevailed. He also wrote to Ayesha asking her to abandon her irreligious intention of accompanying men in the battlefield. But no counsel could change their determination. At last, Ali had to meet the enemy at Khoraiba and renewed his admonition. He called for Thalha and Zobier and, when they were within sight, he said 'How justifiable is your action? You have kept your own ladies within the four walls of your houses; but you have brought the Prophet's widow to be exposed to swords and arrows.' No words could bring them to their senses. Ayesha seated in her litter on a camel called Alasker was giving orders in a shrill tone of voice to charge Ali and his party. Hence it is called the battle of Jamal or camel. The insurgents pressed forward attacking Ali's ranks. Still Ali gave no orders to counter-attack the enemy. He often looked up toward the sky as if he was waiting for divine orders. Suddenly a blush in his countenance proved that his difficulty had been solved by a revelation. Immediately he gave command to attack. A fierce battle ensued, as the most gallant champions of Arabia were present on both sides, but the results could not be in doubt when Ali took part in a battle. Thalha and Zobier were slain in the conflict and Ayesha was taken prisoner. Ali treated her mildly and sent her to Medina under an escort of ladies dressed as men along with her brother Muhammad, son of Abu Kahr,

who was all through the struggle present in Ali's ranks. When Ayesha reached Medina, she blamed Ali for having sent her with men. But her brother silenced her by disclosing the secret.

Moawiah learnt the fate of his accomplices; but without losing heart, he made feverish preparations to invade Ali's territory. Merwan, with the blood stained garment of Osman to which were stitched the severed fingers of his wife Naila, had done much to set up people against Ali. The Syrians resolved to help Moawiah with all in their power.

Ali was not unconscious of what was going on abroad. To watch the movements of the enemy and to prevent him from entering a territory which had not come under Moawiah's influence, Ali changed his capital to Kufa.

Moawiah advanced with his mighty forces towards Kufa. But Ali met him at Siffin, a place between Syria and Iraq, and arrested his onward march. Historians state that as many as ninety skirmishes took place here and the casualties in Ali's ranks were not even half of what the enemy suffered. In a conflict, fell Ammar bin Yasir, a companion of the Prophet, well-known for his piety and holiness, who had seen about ninety summers of Arabia and had taken part in three of the engagements with the Prophet against his enemies. Ali grieved at the loss of this saintly being, stood between the two armies and challenged Moawiah saying 'Why do you cause so much bloodshed among Moslems? Come out of your ranks and have a combat with me and let him have the whole himself who kills the other.' Amr, Moawiah's minister, encouraged his master and said 'That is a fair challenge.' Moawiah rebuked him, saying 'How can it be fair, when none has been successful in a combat with Ali. Your

encouraging words mean that you have a mind to rule over my territory when I have been slain in a personal fight with Ali.'

When no reply was forthcoming, Ali with twelve thousand chosen men made such an onslaught on Moawiah's forces that every rank of the enemy was broken.

In one of the battles of Siffin fought during a night called 'Lailath-ul-Hareer,' most of the historians say that Ali was moving to and fro like a hungry lion, his eyes shining like flames, causing destruction in Moawiah's columns. No less than five hundred shouts of Alla-ho-Akbar from Ali's lips were counted and each time a soldier of Moawiah was slain.

On another occasion, Moawiah through his trickery managed to lodge his armies by the banks of the Euphrates and prevented Ali's forces from having access to its waters. Ali sent a few men to ask Moawiah to allow them to carry water to their encampment. But Moawiah refused, saying 'Not a drop will be allowed to Ali and his people and they must die with parched throats.' Upon this, Ali gave orders to his forces to attack Moawiah and to oust him from the banks of the Euphrates. In a very short time, Moawiah's army had to flee in disorder and Ali with his forces occupied the river bank. A day passed and Moawiah could get no water. The next day he sent a few men with pitchers and leathern bags to request Ali to grant them permission to take water to their own encampment. Upon this Amr interfered and said 'O Moawiah! you did not allow Ali's people to have a drink. Do you expect Ali to comply with your request?' Moawiah replied, 'Ali is not like me and will not act as I acted.' When the men reached Ali's presence, he asked them to carry as much water as they wanted and said 'I cannot behave as the ignorant have behaved.'

At last, a day came when Ali's forces led by Malek-al-Ashtar made such an onslaught that Moawiah lost heavily. The defeated enemy fled like chaff before the storm. Moawiah was sitting along with his minister Amr, son of A'as. Malek made a rush towards him and was about to cut away the ropes of his tent to arrest him. In despair, Moawiah asked his minister to play a trick so that the approaching calamity might be averted. Amr issued from the back door and ordered his remaining soldiers to hoist up copies of the holy Koran to the points of their lances and to present them towards Ali's forces crying out 'Let the Koran decide our differences. Who would guard the Moslem country, if the Moslems of the Syrian border are destroyed?' This stratagem of Amr had the desired effect. Ali's forces refused to fight. But Ali told them 'I know Moawiah and Amr from their boyhood. They have no connection whatsoever with the Koran or religion. This is only a trickish device to prevent our victory and to gain time to recoup strength.' All his words were in vain. Ali's own men handicapped by Amr's trickery began to be harsh with him and they threatened that, if he would not yield, they would desert and even attack him. They insisted that Malek should be called back. Men went to call Malek, who at first was unwilling to return but had to come, seriously annoyed at the untimely call. The hard-gained victory was snatched away from his hands. He was still more grieved to find his own soldiers turned against Ali.

In short, it was settled that the matter should be referred to an arbitration of two members one from Moawiah's side and the other from Ali's. Moawiah nominated the quick-witted Amr as the representative of the Syrian forces. When Ali was asked by his foolish but stubborn soldiers he refused to express his mind stating

‘Why should one be consulted who has no freedom?’ They suggested the name of Abu Musa-i-Ashary; but Ali said ‘He is wanting in tact and wisdom’ and preferred Abdulla, son of Abbas or Malek. They rejected Ali’s choice and insisted on Abu Musa’s membership in the arbitration. Both parties had to retire, Moawiah rejoicing at the success of Amr’s stratagem and Ali grieved at the gullibility of his men. The two arbitrators met and Amr cunningly began to gain Abu Musa to his side by lavishly honouring and praising him. With a show of love and sympathy for Islam he suggested that in their verdict they should dismiss both Ali and Moawiah and propose the election of a third man to the Caliphate, as both of them had caused great bloodshed among Moslems. The foolish Abu Musa was duped in this way and he promised to pronounce judgment accordingly.

On the appointed day, both parties assembled to hear the judgment of the arbitration. Abu Musa asked his partner to declare his decision; but he cunningly avoided coming first and said ‘It is impolite for me to precede one who is more aged than myself and has been the companion of the Prophet.’ Abu Musa, elated with these pleasing words, got upon the tribunal between the parties and declared ‘As both Ali and Moawiah are guilty of shedding Moslem blood, I dismiss them both from the Caliph’s seat, just as I remove this ring from my finger.’ While saying this, he was actually removing his ring. Then Amr ascended the tribunal and said ‘Abu Musa is Ali’s man and he has deposed Ali. On the other hand, I install Moawiah as the Caliph just as I wear this ring on my finger’ and he put on a ring as he said this. The duped Abu Musa shouted from below that Amr had deceived him by breaking his promise to depose both. But it was too late. Sincere followers of Ali could not accept the

one-sided judgment and again hostility continued as vigorously as ever. But, in the meantime, Moawiah had gathered sufficient men and money for another series of engagements against Ali.

A number of Ali's deserters called Kharijites, numbering over ten thousand, resolved to keep themselves aloof from either party and wanted to give a finishing stroke to the long continued hostility between Ali and Moawiah by slaying them along with Amr. They gathered together at a place called Nahrwan. First Ali took no notice of them. But they increased in number and made an insurrection against Ali. They preached their sentiments and, when a person would not fall in with them they called him impious and slew him. Now Ali thought it his first duty to do away with these. With a small number, he attacked them at Nahrwan. According to his own prediction, made a few days before the battle, he slaughtered them all with the bare exception of nine who fled for their lives in different directions. The present Kharijites found on the borders of Persia and in Turkistan are the descendants of these nine.

Moawiah's experiences of war with Ali proved to him the futility of facing an army led by Ali. He tried a new road to success. He sent strong forces against governors of provinces in Ali's possession and was successful to some extent.

In the meantime, three of the Kharijites conspired to kill Moawiah, Amr, son of Aa's and Ali on an appointed day. One proceeded to Damascus to kill Moawiah; the second went to Egypt to murder Amr; the third named Abdur Rahman, son of Muljim, came to Kufa, the residence of Ali, to accomplish his evil design. The appointed day was the 19th of Ramzan 40 A. H. The attempt of the first two failed. But the third, Abdur Rahman who had

undertaken to accomplish the profane task of murdering Ali, came to him under the guise of a staunch friend. Ali often hinted that he knew his undertaking. To hide his blasphemous mind, he requested Ali to slay him before he could commit such a heinous crime. But Ali retorted that no punishment could be meted out before the accomplishment of the offence. Ali often made him presents and each time he would repeat this couplet :—

‘I desire him to live and he desires to murder me.

‘O Ali! thy grave (murder) is to be accomplished at the hands of thy Moradi friend.’

This Abdur Rahman belonged to the Moradi tribe of Yemen. He had fallen in love with a beautiful Kharijite lady. Khutama by name, whose nearest kith and kin had been slain by Ali in some of the battles. If any one expressed a desire to marry her, she would demand a dowry of three thousand drachmas of silver, a slave girl who could sing well and lastly the head of Ali. In a fit of passion, Abdur Rahman had promised to carry out all her desires.

On the night previous to the appointed day, Abdur Rahman went to the mosque of Kufa with his poisoned sword under his garment. Khutama sent two other men to help Abdur Rahman and to finish the undertaking, should the first stroke fail to produce the desired effect.

Ali had spent the eighteenth day of Ramzan in fasting. When the evening came on, his daughter Umm-i-Kulsoom brought a loaf of barley with some milk and a little common salt. Ali rejected the milk and took a few morsels with salt. He spent the whole night in prayer

and supplication, at times getting very uneasy and even shedding tears. He often went in the courtyard and cast a glance in the heavens and cried out 'The divine command has come and verily the Prophet was correct in describing to me its signs.' The daughter asked him the cause of his uneasiness and weeping. He said 'O daughter! Thy father faced champions and rulers. But no fright ever conquered his heart. But this night the sublimity and grandeur of the Almighty, to whom he is about to return, creates awe and terror in his mind.'

A little before the break of dawn, Ali dressed himself to leave his house. Some water-fowl brought up in his house made a noise and one of them even caught the skirt of his coat with its beak. But Ali said 'You cannot prevent me from responding to the divine call.' He turned towards his daughter and advised her to take care of the birds and never to take her meal before feeding them. When he was about to pass through the door, the chain stuck into his belt and held him fast. But Ali removed it uttering the same words as he had spoken to the fowls.

He reached the mosque and saw Abdur Rahman sleeping on his face. Ali awoke him and said 'This way of sleeping is forbidden. The Prophets sleep on their backs, in expectation of revelations, pious people on their right side and doctors on the left. But sleeping on the face is devilish.' He then hinted 'O Abdur Rahman! Be ready. Your time has come.' Ali then went up the turret and cried the usual call for prayer.

Shortly the whole mosque was full of Moslems. Ali stood in the niche to lead the prayer. As he bowed down to prostrate, Abdur Rahman came behind him and giving a swing to his heavy and poisoned sword brought it down on Ali's head with such force that it cut through the skull

and reached his brain. Ali could not lift up his head for a second prostration. Hasan advanced and acted for the father to finish the prayer. A stream of blood was flowing from Ali's head. He began to collect earth on the floor of the niche and applied it to the wound uttering this verse of the Koran : 'With this (earth) We created you, to it We make you return, and from it We will raise you up a second time.' Just after the completion of the prayer, there was an uproar in the mosque. The culprit had made his way to the house of one of his cousins, who, seeing stains of innocent blood on his garb and sword, arrested him. Soon he learnt what had happened. In fury, the cousin with the assistance of some of his friends was able to bind the criminal hand and foot. The Moslems of Kufa dragged him to the mosque where Ali was rolling in his own blood. People began to spit at and gave blows to Abdur Rahman. Fully trusting Ali's mercy, he cried to him 'Can you save me, O Ali! now from the punishment that the Moslems are inflicting on me. 'A timely thought' replied Ali 'has occurred to thee, O Abdur Rahman!' Then calling Hasan he said 'My son! untie the ropes with which Abdur Rahman's hands and feet are tied. Treat him gently. Let him partake of all that I eat and drink. Let not Moslems beat or abuse him. If I survive, Islamic law will empower me either to revenge or to forgive. But, if the wound proves fatal, the matter will be left to your decision. But mind, do not transgress the bonds of law; give him only a single blow just as I had a single blow at his hands.'

Then Ali ordered his sons to take him to his house. While at home, friends often visited him. Whenever he found them in large numbers, he began his usual preaching. Once, while lying on his death-bed, he said to his friend 'Yesterday I was your companion. This day

I serve you as a warning lesson (that a man of my bravery and military skill had been bedridden) and tomorrow you will miss me altogether.' When the friends dispersed, he left a few dying words to his sons Hasan and Husain. As to his body, he advised them, saying 'Ten thousand of the bravest of Arabia have been slain by my sword. I fear their heirs may do harm to my body after burial. I order you to bury it in some hidden spot among hills at a distance from populated quarters.

At dawn of 21st Ramzan, passed away the noblest soul of the age, whose personality, actions and words were, to the last, supplying lessons of highest morality, bravery tempered with mercy, charity and self-abnegation to his sons in particular and to the wide world in general.

When the coffin was taken out into the street, a crowd of widows and orphans, rending their clothes and beating their heads, followed, crying that one who fed them, clothed them and assisted them in every way was no more to be seen. But Hasan and Husain strode quickly and carried the coffin so swiftly that the crowd could not follow them. At Najaf, a place seven miles from Kufa, the holy body of Ali was interred. The matter remained a secret for a long time; but, after the decline of the Omiade power, it was disclosed by some of his descendants to the Abbaside rulers.

CHAPTER VI

HASAN SUCCEEDS ALI

HASAN succeeded his father Ali as Caliph. But he could not continue long, as Moawiah managed, by his trickish policy, bribery and lavish promises, to buy over most of Hasan's Arab supporters whose fickleness, unfaithfulness and mad passion after wealth have become traditional. From these facts, it is evident that the Prophet's teaching had wrought only a superficial change in the Arabs, but the inner soul of the stone-hearted inhabitants of the sandy plains remained as blunt and as rude as ever with the exception of a microscopic minority that did not desert the Prophet's family even in their worst adversities.

The aim of all Prophets and holy Imams commissioned by God has always been one and the same. They sometimes secluded themselves and left the world to think and understand its own folly in not yielding to the commandments of the Divine Being. Sometimes they punished the world for its crime and sometimes they gave their own lives, if they thought that by so doing a revolution could be brought on for the mental and moral amelioration of the world. Ali's later life had sufficiently punished the hypocrites of Islam and, if Hasan had continued bloodshed, who would remain to listen to the teachings of the following Imams? It is but natural to have a calm after a storm and a storm after a calm. The circumstances and Hasan's inclination to retire to private life and leave the world to meditate once more for its salvation were all in accordance with Divine will. Thus Hasan made peace with Moawiah on the following terms:—

That (1) Moawiah should rule over the Islamic

world in accordance with the principles laid down by God and His Prophet,

(2) Moawiah should not appoint his successor,

(3) The inhabitants of Syria, Iraq and Hedjaz should enjoy peace and security of life and property,

(4) Shiahs and all friends of Ali should not be molested in any way,

(5) Moawiah should not interfere in any way with Hasan, Husain and other relations of the Prophet and Ali,

(6) Fifty thousands of sovereigns from the revenue of Daraljard should be annually sent to Hasan for the maintenance of the Ahlul-Baith, the holy family of the Prophet,

and that (7) in prayers, no one should curse Ali.

Moawiah readily signed the treaty and became the undisputed monarch of the Islamic world. Thus, the son of the two most implacable enemies of the Prophet, viz., Abu Sufian (whose chief aim in life was to destroy the Hashimites and the Prophet particularly) and his wife, the inhuman Hind (who did not shrink from taking out the liver of Hamza, the Prophet's uncle while lying wounded in the battle of Ohad, and chew it with her own teeth), by the strangest freak of fortune noted in History, became the ruler of the so-called disciples of the Hashimite Prophet. Once again, the glory of the Omiade tribe reached its zenith and, to the onlooker, the Divine cause was defeated and Satan had got the upper hand. But, in fact, it was not so. The grand, devilish superstructure was only constructed to be shaken down and be reduced to atoms and it is the Divine cause that must win in the end. Hasan's idea of the treaty was altogether sublime and above common intellects.

Some mischievous person went to Husain and said

‘ You see how your brother has brought shame on your tribe by making peace with the son of Hind.’ Husain rebuked and silenced the superficial critic, saying ‘ My brother has acted in obedience to the orders he received from our grand-father, the Prophet, and I shall act according to the instructions I have received from him.’

Moawiah’s pledges to abide by the terms of the treaty were all nominal. As soon as he saw that his position was secure and undisputed, he began suppressing and persecuting the adherents of Ali. Every day, the priests were ordered to curse and abuse Ali in mosques before beginning their sermons from the pulpit. For fear of being charged with a biased estimate of Moawiah, the Rt. Hon’ble Amir Ali quotes in the ‘ Spirit of Islam ’ the words of one who cannot be accused of being prejudiced against the son of Abu Sufian. ‘ Astute, unscrupulous and pitiless’ says Osborn ‘ the first Caliph of the Omayyads (referring to Moawiah) shrank from no crime necessary to secure his position. Murder was his accustomed mode of removing a formidable opponent. The grandson of the Prophet he caused to be poisoned. Malek-al-Ashthar, the heroic lieutenant of Ali, was destroyed in a like way. To secure the succession of Yezid, Moawiah hesitated not to break the word he had pledged to Husain, the surviving son of Ali. And yet this cool, calculating, thoroughly atheistic Arab ruled over the regions of Islam and the sceptre remained among his descendants for the space of nearly one hundred and twenty years. The explanation of this anomaly is to be found in two circumstances to which I have more than once adverted. The one is that the truly devout and earnest Muslim conceived that he manifested his religion most effectually by withdrawing himself from the affairs of the world. The other is the tribal spirit of the Arabs, Conquerors of Asia, of

North Africa, of Spain, the Arabs never rose to the level of their position. Greatness had been thrust upon them. But, in the midst of their grandeur, they retained in all their previous force of intensity, the passions, the rivalries, the petty jealousies of the desert. They merely fought again on a wider field the battles of the Arabs before Islam.'

Though Hasan retired to private life and engaged himself in devoted prayers and abstemiousness, the Omiade antagonism pursued him even there. Several efforts were made to destroy even this innocent soul in secrecy. Moawiah had entertained in service a specialist in preparing effective poisons and encouraged him by presents and special consideration at the court. By his help, the bloody monarch was successful in poisoning Malek-al-Ashthar and most of his formidable enemies, who would not stoop before a Government based on treachery and fraud. Several times, he attempted to kill Hasan unobserved; but failed in his object. At last, he secretly made arrangements with a wife of Hasan that, should she succeed in fatally poisoning Hasan, she would be married to Yezid, the son of Moawiah, and a large present would be awarded to her.

Some ten years after the martyrdom of Ali, a certain evening, the wicked woman dissolved the deadly poison sent to her by Moawiah in the water which Hasan had kept in a goblet for drinking purposes. In the night, the grandson of the Prophet got up from his bed and had scarcely swallowed a mouthful of water from the goblet when he began to feel a cutting sensation in the organs of his alimentary canal and rolled about with intense agony. Finding out the treachery and the culprit, he called his brother Husain and left a few dying words. He suggested that his body be interred by the side of the Prophet and,

if Husain met with any opposition from any of the enemies of his family, he had to yield and take the coffin to the Baquee cemetery where lay their mother, the Prophet's daughter. Thus Hasan endeavoured to stop bloodshed even after his demise, as he had done during his lifetime. Just when the coffin was being carried towards the Prophet's grave, a number of Omiades mounted on horses turned away the bier by a shower of darts and Husain was thus obliged, in obedience to his brother's last words, to take the coffin to Baquee and to bury the body there.

When the news of Hasan's death reached Damascus, Moawiah cried out 'Alla-ho-Akbar' in joy. One of his wives, Faktha, astonished at this unusual call, questioned him as to the cause of his rejoicing. 'Hasan' replied Moawiah 'is dead'. 'Strange' cried the lady 'You rejoice at the murder of the Prophet's grandson and still you call yourself a Moslem.' 'What has it to do with religion?' said Moawiah in shame 'my rival is no more and I rejoice.' Moawiah sent the promised reward to the wife of Hasan that had wrought the most criminal act, that a woman can do against a husband, but refused to bring about her marriage with his son Yezid, saying 'Yezid's life is dear to me and I cannot allow him to enter into a matrimonial contract with one who has murdered an innocent Imam of Hasan's stamp.'

Simon Oakley, B.D., once Arabic Professor of the University of Cambridge and a man of considerable information in Saracenic literature, concludes the life of Hasan in the following manner :—

'Among my authorities, I find one who, treating of Hasan's death, asserted that, in the treaties between him and Moawiah, it had been stipulated that Moawiah should never declare a successor, so long as Hasan lived; but should leave, as Omar had before, the election in the

hands of a certain number of persons to be nominated by Hasan. Moawiah, therefore, being desirous of leaving the Caliphate to his son Yezid and thinking that he could not bring his design about, so long as Hasan was alive, determined to get rid of him.'

He goes on to say in the last para. of the chapter allotted to the Caliphate of Hasan, 'He died at the age of forty-seven years, in the month of Safar of the forty-ninth year Hijri. He left directions in his will that he should be buried near his grandfather, Muhammad; but, to prevent any disturbance and lest his body should be forcibly carried to the common burial place, he thought it proper to ask Ayesha's leave, which she granted. Notwithstanding this, when he was dead, Said, who was governor of the town, and Merwan, the son of Hakam, and the whole family of Omayyah that were then at Medina opposed it; upon which the heat between the two families rose to a great height. At last, Ayesha said that it was her house and that she would not allow him to be buried there. Therefore, they laid him in the common burying place. When Moawiah heard of Hasan's death, he fell down and worshipped.'

This is the version that the learned author got from the Sunni source. Shiah books say that, among the Omiades who attacked with arrows the coffin of Hasan, Ayesha was present mounted on a mule crying that it was her house and that she would not allow the grandson of Khadija to be buried by the side of the Prophet. Abdulla bin Abbas; astonished at this unique sight, composed and read out a couplet on the occasion. The couplet can be translated in these words:—

'Thou once rodest on the camel, thou ridest now on a mule and, if thou livest, wilt ride on an elephant.

Thy share is one-ninth of an eighth. But thou desirest to appropriate the whole.'

With the death of Hasan, Moawiah thought he was quite at liberty to act as he desired. He appointed his own tribesmen as Governors all over the dominion with the orders that any one found praising Ali or reading traditions of the Prophet in his favour should at once be hanged or cut to pieces. Mysam-i-Thammar who refused to curse Ali suffered a horrible death. His limbs were first severed and, when he still continued praising Ali, his tongue was cut out and his body hanged on a tree. Hajar bin Adi Kandi was ruthlessly murdered for the same reason. Muhammad, son of Abu Bakr, who had a special attachment to Ali and his holy sons, was killed and his body was placed in the abdominal cavity of a she-ass. The opening which was made in the skin of the animal was then stitched up and it was thrown into the flames. Thus, the two decades of Moawiah's reign were a horrible period for the true Moslems. In the single city of Bassorah, not less than eight thousand of those who professed obedience to Ali as a part of their faith and even those who were suspected of being attached to the family of the Prophet were butchered pitilessly. Many of the weak and disabled who were supported by the Baith-ul-mal lost their pensions. (Kithab-ul-Imamath was Siasath and Kithab-ul-Ihdas.) Muhammad bin Yoosuf-ul-Ganji, a Sunni historian of the Shafi sect, has dealt at some length with the atrocities committed by Moawiah.

The Shiahs were thus compelled to leave towns and cities and settle in jungles, but some preferred to cross the Islamic borders, and proceeded to Persia, China, Africa, etc. The Prophet's family advised its adherents to hide their faith for the safety of their person, property and religion. This concealing of faith is called Thaqia and it

is this Thaqia that has made the Shiahhs again powerful. If they had not been advised to practise Thaqia by the learned doctors of the Prophet's family, their religion would certainly have been effaced from the earth's surface.

Every time Husain, the only surviving son of Ali, heard of the inhuman slaughter of the adherents of his family, his heart melted with grief and sometimes he even wept bitterly. When Hajar bin Adi was murdered in a horrible way at the orders of Moawiah, Husain was moved to such a height of pain that he could not refrain from writing a letter to that most deadly enemy of the Prophet's house reminding him of his pledges. The letter runs as follows :—

'O Moawiah! Are you not the murderer of Hajar bin Adi? Did you not slaughter like sheep the most pious and God-fearing of men who looked down on every innovation in religion as a heinous crime and who cared naught for the criticisms of the wrongful critics? You have killed a great number of those guiltless personages whom you had pledged yourself to protect. Beware! You have broken your word by the sharp edge of your sword.'

Moawiah lavishly spent the public wealth on those who coined fictitious traditions in commendation of himself and other enemies of the Prophet's family. He even succeeded in getting such traditions in favour of Abu Sufian, Amr bin Aa's, Merwan and his father Hakam. Thus, the greater portion of the enormous number of the existing traditions is a compilation of lies and, in some cases, a set of demoralising sentences which are unworthy of an ordinary man and much more so of a Prophet. Their wording itself makes the forgery not doubtful but certain. The bad name that Islam has obtained abroad is chiefly due

to these concocted traditions which are the outcome of Moawiah's mischief and blasphemy.

Allama Sibth Ibn-i-Jauzi, a famous Sunni historian, writes that the enemies of Ali tried to search out Ali's defects; but, when their efforts failed, they began to praise his enemies in despair and thus attempted to lower Ali's reputation in Islam. Moawiah was cunning enough to respect the name of the Prophet, as he thought his success lay in the ostentatious profession of Islam; for he feared any declaration of his deviation from Islam would bring about his ruin. Nevertheless, he attempted with some success to cast aside gradually most of the minor practices of Islam in an imperceptible manner, thus paving the way for the violation of ordinances of greater importance during his future career, if he should live; and, should he die, aiming thereby that his work might be taken up by his irreligious successors.

Below are given some of the innumerable quotations from Sunni authors which throw sufficient light on Moawiah's faith and conduct.

Abu Yula quotes the following statement from Abu Huraira who says 'I was one day accompanying the Prophet when he heard some music. He asked me to see who were singing. I went up (the roof) and found Moawiah and Amr bin Aa's singing. I returned and informed the Prophet what I had seen. The Prophet said 'O Lord! Put them both in mischief and throw them both prostrate into hell.'

Musnad-i-Imam Ahmed-i-Hambel, Volume V, records the following incident as related by Obeidulla bin Buraida in the following words :—'My father and myself both went to Moawiah. We sat on the carpet. The table was arranged. We partook of a meal. Then intoxicant liquors were brought in. Moawiah quaffed a cup and

presented another to my father who refused to take it, saying, 'Since the time the Prophet prohibited the use of liquors, I have never tasted them.' Upon this, Moawiah replied 'I was the most handsome of all the Quraishi young men. My teeth were strong and healthy; but nothing was more pleasant to me than wine, milk and humorous society.'

The famous author Imam Jalaluddin Syoothi writes: 'It is Moawiah who first rode between Safa and Merwa, who first drank Nabeez (a kind of wine prepared from dates) and ate earth and allowed others to eat it. He sat on the Prophet's pulpit and was accepting oaths of fealty to his son Yezid, when Ayesha put out her head from a room and cried 'Stop, Moawiah! stop. Did the first two Caliphs appoint their sons as successors?' 'No' said Moawiah. 'Then whom' criticised Ayesha 'do you follow in this audacious step?' Moawiah got ashamed and came down the pulpit. But he secretly arranged to dig a pit with the result that she fell in it and died.'

Oakley's description of Ayesha's death slightly differs from the above statement. He says:—

'There is a tradition that Ayesha was murdered by the direction of Moawiah, and the following particulars are recorded:—

Ayesha having resolutely and insultingly refused to engage her allegiance to Yezid, Moawiah invited her to an entertainment, where he had prepared a very deep well or pit in that part of the chamber reserved for her reception and had the mouth of it deceptively covered over with leaves and straw. A chair was then placed upon the fatal spot and Ayesha, on being conducted to her seat, instantly sank into eternal night and the mouth of the pit was immediately covered with stone and mortar.' (History of the Saracens by Oakley, p. 375.)

CHAPTER VII

YEZID, SON OF MOAWIAH

MOAWIAH, once attracted by the beauty of a Bedewin girl named Mysoona, daughter of Najdal-i-Kalbia, a resident of Najd, soon entered into a matrimonial contract with her. He constructed a beautiful mansion for her residence and named it 'The Green Palace.' She was a poor girl; and he thought that a palatial residence attended with royal luxuries would please her immensely. On the contrary, she was quite displeased with the marriage and her company in the palace was a source of pain and distress to Moawiah, with the result that he had to sever all his connections with her. Allamah Dameeri, a historian of great renown, records the following facts, in his work 'The Hyathul Hyvan':—

'After Moawiah's wedding with Mysoona, daughter of Najdal-i-Kalbia, she was taken from Najd to Syria. She was very handsome and attractive. Moawiah loved her immensely. On the other hand, she had a strong dislike for him. She composed a few lines in which she compared him to a camel with a hole in its nose. Once, when Moawiah entered 'The Green Palace,' she was singing those lines. Moawiah got offended with her ideas about him and divorced her thrice, ensuring a complete dissolution of marriage according to Islamic principles. But her charming features attracted him again and the two lived as husband and wife for another period. This time, she conceived a male child. Again, Mysoona's hatred for him brought about a permanent separation and she went back to her native village in Najd. Here was Yezid

born.' The birth of Yezid is recorded to have taken place during the reign of Osman.

According to Islamic laws, a husband cannot take back his wife after a threefold divorce, until she gets married to another man and secures a divorce from him. Thus Moawiah's second period of intercourse with Mysoona was illegal and hence, according to Moslem law, Yezid can be termed the illegitimate son of Moawiah.

Abul Fida, the famous historian, describes the same facts with a slight difference. The cause of separation, according to this learned author, was a couplet, among others, which Mysoona was singing at the time of Moawiah's entry into the palace. The couplet can be translated thus :—

'Had I been wedded to one of the poor sons of my uncle,'

'He would have been more charming and a greater source of pleasure to me than this grazing calf.'

Moawiah heard this and said 'Go and live with your own people, if you are unwilling to be my partner.' (p. 267, Translation of Abul Fida's History published at Delhi.)

'The Zubdatul Fiqra Fi Thari-Khil Hijra, written specially by Aboos-i-Mansoori to describe elaborately the affairs of the Omiades, records the following lines as sung by Mysoona :—

'The coarse cloth of my own garment is more pleasant to me than this grand and delicate dress.'

My own ill-ventilated cottage is more wholesome to me than this lofty palace.

The sounds produced by the winds blowing over the depressions of the desert are more charming to my ear than this music.

A hospitable cur is superior to a thousand stingy cats.

I prefer a young virgin she-camel to one reduced and rotten by age and by giving birth to young ones.

The reptiles and hares of the forest form a more delicious food than these crumbs of bread.

I prefer to have been married to one of the well-born and brave sons of my uncle to being wedded to this stinking infidel.'

On hearing this contemptuous song, Moawiah was angry and divorced her.

But the account given by the author of the *Nasikhuth-Thavareekh* is very peculiar. He says that Mysoona had an illegal connection with a slave of her father, named Saffakh. When she was brought to Damascus, Moawiah found her to have lost her virginity and sent her back to her own village. Here she gave birth to a male child whom Moawiah owned as his son and named him Yezid (*Nasikhuth-Thavareekh*, vol. VI, p. 155.)

From these illuminative facts, we can infer from what loins Yezid had sprung. An Omiade, son of illegal birth, Bedewin born of a mother of suspicious chastity, brought up among the Nomads of the desert, notorious for their stone-heartedness, highway robbery and murder, Yezid represented in its fullest measure the dark side of Pre-Islamic Arabia. He often visited his father's capital and found nothing wanting there, to satisfy his base passions. Wine and woman were his choicest objects and the wealth and power of a madly fond father, at the head of a huge territory, were his means to acquire these. The flattery and lavish praises of his time-serving and selfish companions made him intoxicated with pride. They used to draw verbal pictures of the beauty of some

girl or other and he would use his father's influence to get her by his side.

Of the many incidents of his type, we mention one here for our readers. Abdulla bin Salam was, during the time of Moawiah, the governor of Iraq. His wife, Zainab, daughter of Ishaq, was renowned for her beauty. Magnified accounts of her charming features created a frenzy in Yezid to own her as wife. He tried all devices to gain his object and, when no success ensued, he had recourse to the last and most effective one. He sent word to his father to secure Zainab for him and stated that, if the father would not promise to comply with his request, he would kill himself by seclusion and starvation. First, Moawiah dreaded the idea; but, when he found the son to be obstinate, he yielded and promised to obtain Zainab. Taking advantage of Abdulla's position as governor under him, he drafted a letter summoning him to attend his court, stating that he wanted to consult him on some affairs of administration.

When Abdulla came, Moawiah showed unusual regard for him. The monarch would get up as a mark of respect, when Abdulla entered the durbar. A seat adjacent to the monarch's throne was allowed to him in the court. A grand building very near 'the Green Palace' was given him for residence. Every day, a man was sent to enquire about his health.

After these preliminary measures to entrap Abdulla were successfully adopted, a nobleman, commanding great respect at the court, was sent with the message that the monarch was so pleased with Abdulla's behaviour that he wanted to give him his own daughter in marriage. Abdulla, struck at this unexpected offer, first tried to evade it, saying that he had a good looking and pious lady at home and would not like to allow a rival to share

his love. But the messenger advised him that the king's offer should not be rejected specially when he was in his service. Abdulla reluctantly gave his consent. He was congratulated by the great men of the city and had grand invitations. Wherever he went, he was regarded as the son-in-law of the monarch.

A few days passed in festivity and exultation. Another messenger came to Abdulla demanding that he should divorce Zainab, daughter of Ishaq, for it was beneath the dignity of an emperor's daughter to have a rival at her husband's house. This Abdulla was not willing to do. But the messenger threatened him with ruin if he refused. Partly in expectation of getting the princess and partly for fear of losing his governorship and even his life, he wrote a letter divorcing Zainab, daughter of Ishaq. The messenger returned with Abdulla's writing and handed it over to Moawiah. The next day, Abdulla went to see his would-be father-in-law; but the gate-peon stopped him, saying that the monarch was unwell and did not wish to see him. He pleaded that he was to become the son-in-law of Moawiah and his presence would not be offensive to him even in illness. The gate-peon replied that that was a matter of the previous day and that day things had changed, as the princess was unwilling to marry him, for reasons which could not be disclosed. The third day, Abdulla got an order to proceed at once to Iraq, as the administration of the province was suffering, due to his long absence. The poor man with hopes frustrated and wife lost returned to his headquarters.

As soon as Yezid saw that Zainab was free, he despatched one Abu Darda with Abdulla's letter dissolving his marriage with her, to be handed over to her and to express Yezid's offer to marry her. Zainab was, then, at Medina with her own people. Abu Darda reached

the place ; but, before going direct to Zainab, he had, like other new-comers, to visit Husain, the only surviving grandson of the Prophet. Husain questioned him as to what brought him there. He narrated the facts and added that the stories of her beauty had conquered his heart and that he too wanted to win her hand. Hearing this, Husain also offered to marry her, if she was only willing. Abu Darda appeared before Zainab with the letter of divorce and the three offers. First, she burst into sobs on the shocking news of her husband's eternal separation. As to the three offers, she said 'O Abu Darda ! I reject you, as your partnership will be of no avail to me anywhere. Now remain Yezid and Husain; I make you the judge to decide and tell me whose company will best suit me.' 'Yezid' he said 'is the son of a monarch commanding great worldly pomp, power and wealth; I would suggest you marry him, if you are desirous of earthly pleasures. But Husain is the most saintly person of the day. If you want happiness in the next world, then accept Husain's hand.' 'As for the worldly pleasures,' replied Zainab 'I do not care for them; for they are transitory, and the wealth I possess is sufficient for me to lead a fairly happy life. But I cannot value lightly the happiness of the world to come; for it is everlasting. Therefore, I accept Husain in preference to Yezid.' The nikah was performed and the lady soon entered Husain's harem. The messenger, struck at the sudden turn the events had taken, returned to Yezid with the woeful tale. Irritated at the lady's action, Yezid instigated his father to dismiss Abdulla from the state service. The poor man had to suffer for something for which he was not responsible. All his property in Iraq and Kufa was confiscated. He became penniless and had nothing to live on. He remembered that he had once

left two purses of gold coins in the caustody of his wife Zainab. He thought of opening a business with that capital and, to receive it, he walked all the way from Iraq to Medina. Here he learnt that Zainab had accepted Husain's hand and was living in his house. He came there and knocked at the door. Hearing that Abdulla had come, Zainab came to the threshold and stood behind a curtain, as she could neither see nor be seen now by Abdulla. Both were speaking with tears in their eyes. Husain learnt of Abdulla's visit to his house and went to meet him. He suddenly removed the curtain and said 'God knows that I have never cast a glance on Zainab. She is still your wife; as the divorce taken under compulsion was no divorce and my nikah was no nikah. I kept her in my custody just to hand her over to you.'

The two, husband and wife, returned home, praising the grandson of the Prophet for his wise interference and cursing Yezid for the evil design he attempted to accomplish.

When the whole of Arabia was echoing with cries of horror at Yezid's immorality, the father tried to charge public opinion about the son, by making a show of his religious observances. Yezid was asked to perform the Haj pilgrimage; so that pilgrims from the various quarters of the Moslem world might carry with them the news of Yezid's piety. But, even in sacred places like Mecca and Medina, he could not overcome his unbridled cravings.

Allama Ibni Aseer records in his 'Thareekhi Kamil,' Volume IV, that Yezid was once engaged in drinking at Medina when Abdulla, son of Abbas, and Husain went to visit him at his own residence. An interview was refused to Abdulla; only Husain was allowed in. The rake had lost all sense of reverence for godly beings. In the

presence of Husain, he quaffed off a cup and presented another to his holy visitor, who rebuked the culprit in these words 'We are above such things.'

This Yezid was to be the next ruler of the Islamic world. The father practised all his crimes under the nominal cover of Islam. There is an Arabic proverb that the son represents the inner self of the father. Yezid was Moawiah's inner self. The cover was removed and in Yezid could be seen the real Moawiah undisguised.

Moawiah had poisoned Hasan, to remove a formidable foe to whom he had given his pledges in writing. Though he had promised to leave the appointment of the next ruler of the Islamic commonwealth in the hands of a council, now he thought there was none to question him, if he broke his pledges. Fearing that the council might decide in favour of any other claimant, he tried to nominate Yezid, as his successor, and employed his wealth, influence, craft and all other means at his disposal to accomplish his design before death could overtake him.

Abdul Berr-i-Mecci in his book 'Istheeab' refers to this intention of Moawiah during Hasan's life. He disclosed his idea to a selected few and ordered them to keep it secret until a suitable time arrived. After the murder of Hasan, he took up the question of Yezid's nomination. He was no fool to initiate it in provinces other than Syria. He knew that the Meccans and Medinites would be horrified at such news. Syria, he knew, was the place where he could give vent to his ideas and achieve success.

But even in Syria, there were two persons, whose existence Moawiah thought to be detrimental to Yezid's cause. These were Abdur Rahman, son of Khalid, and Saied, son of Osman. Abdur Rahman had been the governor of Hams since the time of Osman. People loved and respected him. Once, in a talk with Moawiah, he suggested

his own name as the next ruler of the Moslem world. Moawiah heard it coolly, but made up his mind to do away with him by his noiseless and most effective weapon. Every day he expressed greater affection for Abdur Rahman. He often wrote letters to him expressing his love and regard for him. Once, Abdur Rahman got ill. Hearing this news, Moawiah immediately despatched his Jewish friend, expert in preparing poisons, with necessary instructions. The medicine given by the Jewish doctor was administered to Abdur Rahman, with the result that his abdomen began to swell, until at last it burst open throwing out all its contents.

Saied, son of Osman, was Yezid's only rival now in Syria. He once came to see Moawiah. In the interview, Moawiah asked him if he had declared his own candidature for the next ruler of the Islamic world proving his superiority over Yezid. Saied did not deny this; but still affirmed 'My parents are certainly better than Yezid's parents.' 'No doubt about that' replied Moawiah 'But Yezid's talents and personal attainments are higher than yours.' After some talk, Saied was given a present of four lakhs of drachmas and was appointed as governor of Khorasan, a remote district of Persia, so that he might be pacified and kept at a safe distance from Moawiah's centre of activities.

When these two opponents were thus removed one by poison and the other by bribery, Moawiah, held a conference of Syrian nobles and disclosed his ideas about Yezid. Three of those present namely Zohak bin Qees, Saied bin Aa's and Haseen bin Nameer spoke fervently in the conference. 'The Rouzathus Safa' gives a detailed account of their speeches. But here we content ourselves by saying that their speeches were all in favour of Yezid. They praised both Moawiah and his son and declared

that there was none except Yezid who was suited to occupy Moawiah's seat after his demise.

One, Ahnaf by name, who was suspected by Moawiah to be friendly to the Prophet's house, was also present. He remained quite silent through all this. Moawiah turned towards him and said 'O Ahnaf ! let us hear a few words from you.' Ahnaf replied 'As to Yezid's actions and his fitness for the place you are the best judge. If you think God will be pleased with his appointment, do it without consulting anybody. But beware of divine wrath, if his appointment is wrong.' Ahnaf's reasonable words were lost in the shouts of joy raised by the audience. The noblemen took oaths of allegiance to Yezid before the meeting terminated. (Rouzathus Safa, Vol. II.)

Mogheira bin Shuba, the governor of Kufa, was endowed with enormous powers to make the people of his province acknowledge Yezid as Moawiah's successor. But the Kufians would not easily yield. By lavish presents, the governor first succeeded in winning ten of them to his side. These ten were sent to Moawiah to take in his presence, the oath of allegiance to Yezid. Musa, a son of Mogheira, accompanied those ten to Damascus. Moawiah advised them to be firm in their allegiance to Yezid but not to make public their oaths taken in favour of his son.

The Rouzathus Safa records the following dialogue that took place between Moawiah and Musa on the occasion :—

Moawiah.—For how much did your father, Mogheira, purchase these ten for me ?

Musa.—For three thousand silver coins each.

Moawiah.—What regard have religion and truth in the eyes of these who will do anything for money ?

By such means, Moawiah attained a fair success in Kufa. His attention was next turned towards Iraq, which, through sword, poison, exile and other inhuman means, had been emptied of all those attached to the house of the Prophet. Still there were a few who hated Moawiah and Yezid; but they had not the moral courage to express their hatred for fear of punishment. Here too he had good success.

Encouraged by the success attained in these provinces, he tried to raise this question in Mecca and Medina. Fortunately for Moawiah, the Governor of Medina was the notorious Merwan, whose vicious character and ill-will towards the Ahlul-Baith were proverbial. Moawiah had learnt that Abdulla, son of Omar, commanded great influence in those parts. Just to win him over to his side, he sent a hundred thousand drachmas to Merwan to be handed over to Abdulla, son of Omar, and to ask him to accept Yezid as the future monarch. When Merwan took the money to Abdulla, he first accepted it; but, on hearing the demand to acknowledge Yezid as the next caliph, he was astounded, returned the money and declared 'I am aged and grey and should not like to sell my faith for this amount.'

Merwan informed Moawiah of Abdulla's refusal to accept the money, or to acknowledge Yezid as the next caliph. He also wrote that a great many people were attached to Abdulla and that, until he took a fell in with Moawiah's ideas, it was futile to expect the public to swear allegiance to Yezid. He added in his letter that Ayesha was opposed to the appointment of Yezid and that she openly protested against the action of the monarch and said that Abu Bakr and Omar never appointed their sons in their own places and to do so was an innovation of Moawiah and the habit

of oppressive earthly monarch. (Rouzathus Safa, p. 33.)

Moawiah read the letter and, after some consideration, asked his son to visit Mecca and Medina on a pilgrimage. He advised Yezid to be very generous and charitable to the Meccans and Medinites, so that the people might be entrapped by his liberal presents and might form a better opinion of him. This device was fairly successful; for some of the Meccans and Medinites, after receiving their shares, composed and sang verses praising Yezid.

Next, Moawiah, invited Abdulla, son of Zobier, to Syria. This Abdulla was a very crafty person and had cherished ideas of becoming a caliph ever since 'The Battle of the Camel' in which his father fell, in revolting against Ali. When he reached Damascus, Moawiah received him with great courtesy and regard. His pleasing words and generous promises could not change Abdulla who soon returned to Medina, scenting danger in consequence of his refusal to accept Moawiah's suggestions.

Again, Merwan received a letter containing an order to gather the nobility of Medina in the Government House and to invite them to acknowledge Yezid as the next ruler, just as the gentry of Syria, Kufa and Egypt had done.

Merwan was put to great inconvenience in carrying out this order; for Abdur Rahman, son of Abu Bakr, caught hold of him by the leg and was about to pull him down from the pulpit from which he was praising Yezid and inviting people to swear allegiance to him. The Omiades present were indignant at the sufferings of their governor and were ready to assault Abdur Rahman for his action, when Ayesha, having learnt of this conflict, hurried to the spot with a number of ladies and began to curse and scold Merwan.

A number of letters were written to Moawiah explaining to him the state of affairs in Medina. Moawiah got restless and did not know how to proceed to make his design a success. In the meantime, a letter from Omar, son of Osman made things worse. The letter ran thus:—The Iraqians and leaders of Hedjaz often pay their respects to Husain. I am not confident that Husain will keep peace and will not revolt. Though there is no fear of any such thing at present, I cannot assure you of his conduct after your death. Just let me know how you think of him.'

On reading this letter, Moawiah got very uneasy; for he thought Husain had the strongest claim to the Caliph's seat among those living in Hedjaz. He at once drafted a letter to Husain in which he did not hint directly at Yezid's succession; but made a complaint of the addressee's conduct, reiterating the words of Omar, son of Osman. The following is a summary of Moawiah's letter to Husain:—

'I have been hearing much about you. If the stories related to me are true, you had better change your conduct and avoid all those ideas which you have been cherishing. But, if the information I received is false and you are free of all those charges laid at your doors, admonish yourself to keep you firm to your promises. If you deny my rights, I will be compelled to deny yours. If you approach me, I will also approach you. Beware! No dissension may arise among the followers of the Prophet on your account. Understand the public; weigh them in the balance of your experience. Be firm in having regard for the followers of the Prophet and for the Islamic laws. Never pay attention to the words of the lunatic.'

Husain received the letter and read it. He at once sent for ink and paper and wrote to Moawiah in reply thus:—

‘O Moawiah! I received your letter, in which you have, to my astonishment, made mention of my hostilities towards you. Know that the gates of blessings neither open nor shut but by the order of the Almighty. All that you heard about me is the concoction of liars and flatterers. Let it be known to you that at present I have no mind to be hostile towards you. But you may also know that I am not pleased with my abandonment of hostilities. You and your Satanic assistants and soldiers should not construe my silence to justify your claims or to excuse your crimes. O Moawiah! Are you not the person who killed Hajar bin Adi Kandi, who was counted as one of the most pious followers of the Prophet, who considered every innovation in religion a revolt against God and cared little for the remarks of the impious critics. You killed persons whose lives you had promised, under solemn pledges, to spare, in spite of the fact that they were peace-abiding and did not create any mischief.

O Moawiah! Are you not the person who slew Amr bin Humuq-i-Khazai who was a pious and venerable associate of the Prophet who had been exceedingly reduced and turned pale in devotion and abstemiousness, though you had granted him a written pledge to save his life? Your promises were such that, if they were made to wild birds, they would have abandoned their nests in the hills and have flown to you. You broke your solemn pledges, revolted against God and slaughtered guiltless souls.

Are you not the person who has illegally owned Ziad son of Sammiah, as your brother notwithstanding the fact that he is the son of a slave of Bani Saqueef tribe? You.

call him the son of your father Abu Sufian, while one committing adultery should, under Muslim law, be punished by stoning. With selfish motives, you rejected the law and made the son of a Saqueefy slave your brother and governor of Iraq. He severed the hands and feet of Moslems ; he blinded them by piercing their eyes with redhot iron; he hanged their bodies on the trees. Were they not the followers of Islam and had they not rights over you ?

Are you not the person, O Moawiah ! who permitted Ziad, son of Sammiah, on his writings, to kill all the followers of Ali in Iraq and not to spare a single soul among them; while it was this Ali who, under divine orders, brought under his sword yourself and your father. With that old grudge and enmity, you have now usurped the Calipahte, though you can claim only 'Shatha and Saif ' as villages belonging to your father. You ask me in your letter to control myself and not to create any mischief and dissension among the followers of the Prophet. As far as I know, there is no greater source of mischief and dissension among the followers of my grandfather, Muhammad, than your impious sway over them and I do not consider a greater boon and a more beneficial thing for the Islamic world than a crusade against you. If I successfully accomplish a crusade against you, my position will be much nearer God and, if I delay, I have to pray to God to forgive me for the negligence of duty and to lead me along the right path. You write to me that, if I safeguard your right, you will safeguard mine and that, if I deny yours, you will deny mine. Instead of expecting this from you, I know all your craft and cunning policy which will reflect on you in conclusion ; you are riding on ignorance and you unhesitatingly break your pledges. Upon my soul, you have not fulfilled even one promise and,

after the peace, you did not keep a single sworn pledge out of the many you made. You killed those pious Moslems, though they had not revolted against you and were guilty of no crime but that they loved us, respected us and praised us. You slaughtered them simply with the idea that, should you die, they will survive you and will not taste the sharp edge of your sword.

O Moawiah ! understand that the Day of Reckoning is sure to come and that God owns a book in which there is no sin whether small or great which is not entered. God is fully aware of your actions and knows that you arrested innocent souls and charged them with crimes they never had committed. Of these, several were put to death and several sent into exile.

You compel people to swear allegiance to your son Yezid who is a drunkard and lover of dogs. By such actions, you have put yourself to serious loss and destroyed your religion. You listen to the words of the ignorant and threaten the pious and virtuous in order to achieve your objects.'

This letter containing Husain's clear and undisguised ideas reached Moawiah. He was angry when he read the contents, and ordered a thousand of his best soldiers to make preparations to leave for Medina. With these, he started and reached Medina after a few days' march.

In Medina, Husain was the first person whom Moawiah met. A mere glance on Husain's countenance roused Moawiah, who, with a frown, began to put forth volleys of impertinent words. 'No welcome to you. No pleasure in seeing you,' began Moawiah 'you resemble a body in which blood is boiling, which blood will soon be shed.' Startled at this immoderate and impolite treatment, Husain replied 'We do not deserve such words.' 'Still

worse and more reproachful words' continued Moawiah, 'are your due. You want something which God does not like and what He wants will surely be done.'

The other leaders of Medina too had no better treatment. It is beyond our province to describe at some length the accounts of the visits of Abdulla, son of Zobier, and Abdur Rahman, son of Abu Bakr, and the hot words that passed between them and Moawiah. But suffice it to say that these along with Husain left for Mccca, fearing severe bloodshed in Medina at their determined refusal to acknowledge Yezid as the next Caliph. Finding Medina free of these influential leaders, Moawiah convened a meeting, got upon the pulpit and addressed the meeting ; saying, 'In my opinion, there is none more suited to occupy the Caliph's seat after me than Yezid. But people relate stories of his immoralities, which I know are mere concoctions. I know they will not refrain from speaking ill of my son until I inflict severe punishment on them. May God guide Husain, son of Ali, Abdulla, son of Zobier, and Abdur Rahman, son of Abu Baker, along the right path and turn their minds to accept Yezid as the next ruler. Otherwise, I will handle them as they deserve.'

After this was done, Moawiah had a private talk with Abdulla, son of Omar, who was still in Medina. But this Abdulla gave an evasive reply to Moawiah's questions and promised to accept the sovereignty of any person who should be chosen by the Moslem public after Moawiah's death. He then retired to his residence and sat inside the four walls of his house, with closed doors, refusing all who wanted to see him for consultation. The seclusion and silence of Abdulla, son of Omar, helped Moawiah a great deal in gaining a considerable number of Medinites to his side.

Then Moawiah came to Mecca. Like diplomatic time-servers who change colours according to circumstances, he assumed a humane and sympathetic demeanour. He spoke very gently and respectfully with Husain and sent him a large present. But Husain was not the man to yield under either threat or favour. Like a man, he refused to accept the present. In spite of this refusal, Moawiah sent word to Husain to see him privately.

In the interview, Moawiah began in a humble tone, 'If you please allow me, I will just mention something, which I believe you will condescend to hear and give me a favourable reply.' 'What is that?' asked Husain. Moawiah continued 'I have already despatched letters to the various provinces and have asked the people of position and fame to acknowledge Yezid as my successor. But I delayed asking those who have a blood connection with Yezid, because I thought they would not hesitate to accept his Caliphate. But, to my astonishment, I find that some of them nurse hostility towards him and are unwilling to acknowledge him as sovereign after me. I do not find any one else better qualified than Yezid whom I can nominate as my successor.'

'Hold your tongue. O Moawiah!' replied Husain 'there are persons possessing better personal qualifications and nobler parentage than Yezid.' Moawiah, understanding the meaning of Husain, said 'No doubt your parents are superior to Yezid's. But he is better suited to manage the affairs of the Caliphate.' Husain at once retorted 'A rake and drunkard may be superior to me in your opinion!'

This reply again irritated Moawiah and he began to employ his usual threatening language, when he could not argue logically, and said 'Let not Yezid hear of your remarks about him lest he should behave to you in an unpleasant manner.'

But Husain silenced him, saying 'I have said what I know of him and let him disclose what he knows about me.'

Moawiah then tried to win over Abdur Rahman, son of Abu Bakr, Abdulla, son of Zobier, and Abdulla, son of Jaffer, to his side by the same means. But none of them would accept his suggestions. At last, tired and disgusted with his failure, he ordered some of his servants to announce in the streets of Mecca that all the leaders of Medina then in Mecca had acknowledged Yezid as Moawiah's successor and that, in a public meeting, they would make a declaration and openly swear allegiance to him.

Moawiah made arrangements for a public meeting and invited the gentry of Mecca along with Husain and other gentlemen who had come from Medina. When a large number of people had assembled, Moawiah got upon the pulpit and declared 'A rumour is prevalent that Husain, Abdulla, son of Zobier, Abdur Rahman, son of Abu Bakr, and some others have been averse to my idea of nominating my son, Yezid, as my successor ; but, when I met each of them separately, they all expressed their joy at this nomination and promised to announce their acceptance in a public gathering like this.'

Moawiah had ordered two of his soldiers to unsheath their swords, to stand by the side of each of his opponents and to show their readiness to behead them, if they interrupted his speech and declared any opposition on the spot. Husain wanted to get up and protest against what Moawiah said. The two soldiers by his side raised their swords to strike off Husain's head, in accordance with the instructions given them by the monarch. But Moawiah interfered and cunningly told his own men not to behave harshly with Husain and not to do

him any harm. Then turning towards Husain, he said 'Do not be hasty. After I have finished, you can say what you wish.' He then began praising his son, making mention of some of the good qualities which, according to his statement, Yezid possessed. As soon as his speech was over he signed secretly to his followers to disperse, making a loud noise of joy, as pre-arranged with his soldiers and some of those who attended the meeting. Thus, Husain and other leaders had no chance of speaking. Many of those present ran to Moawiah to swear allegiance to Yezid, thinking that Husain and other leaders had no idea of opposing Moawiah. Actually, these leaders were simply astonished at the trick played by Moawiah.

We have already stated that, to keep the holy family of the Prophet from reaching power and position, the mode of appointing Caliphs changed from time to time. But now, the nomination of the son by the father was a new record in the list of those modes, so that the only surviving member of the holy family might be deprived of the right which was exclusively his. We close this chapter with the statement that Moawiah shrank from no crime, however heinous it might be, to make the position of his son secure; for he often used to say, just after the accomplishment of each of his innumerable grave offences, 'It is for Yezid that I do all this.'

CHAPTER VIII

YEZID AT THE HEAD OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD

YEZID had gone to pay a visit to his mother at her father's village when a messenger brought to him a letter, written by Muslim, son of Aqaba, and Zohaq, son of Quees, which contained the news of Moawiah's death. He hurried to Damascus to take charge of the seat vacated by his father. With tears in his eyes, he dragged himself to the grave of Moawiah, sat close to it and wept bitterly in company with some of his friends. From here, he rode to 'The Green Palace.' He then had a black silken turban on his head and at his waist hung the sword of his deceased father.

A very costly tent woven with threads of pure silk, was pitched for him, with a dais inside wrapped with valuable carpet. He climbed the steps and sat on the dais. People from different quarters flocked round him to condole on his bereavement. They then congratulated him on his succession to the so called caliphate.

When these formalities were over, Yezid stood up and addressed the audience in the following words :—

'O inhabitants of Syria ! Good tidings to you ! We have been in the right and have always assisted our religion. We have long been enjoying blessings. Now beware ! A war is about to be declared between ourselves and the Iraqians ; for, during the past two or three nights, I have been dreaming that a river of fresh blood separated ourselves and the inhabitants of Iraq. I attempted to cross it, but failed to do so. The son of

Ziad suddenly appeared and crossed the river, while I was merely standing idle.'

The nobility of Syria cried in a loud tone of voice 'We are ready for thy service and wait for thy orders. We are prepared to obey thy commands and accompany thee wherever thou goest. We shall labour for thee to the best of our abilities. The Iraqians have witnessed our valour. We still possess the same swords, which we used in the battles of Siffin.'

Yezid then replied 'Upon my life, you have stated the facts. I rely on you in all my affairs. It is manifest how cautious my father was in safeguarding your rights. There has been none in Arabia so generous and charitable as my father. He was not wanting in eloquence. His speech was never marred with stammering or any defect of articulation, until he died.'

Yezid's speech had reached this stage, when a voice from the last row of the audience interrupted him, saying 'O enemy of God! Moawiah never possessed these qualities. You are only a liar.' Yezid was startled at this sudden interruption and ordered the arrest of the intruder. People searched for him. But he had vanished with the voice. One of Yezid's accomplices said 'O Amir! mind not the words of your enemies. Enjoy the vast empire bequeathed to thee by thy father. To-day thou art our Caliph. After thee, we shall acknowledge thy son as our head. There is none dearer to us than thyself and thy son.' Elated at this flattery, Yezid gave orders that a costly garment should be granted to his friend and then resumed his speech, though giving a certain turn to his ideas. He went on saying 'Moawiah was a servant of God, Who had raised him to honour and position. He was better than any of those living to-day and those yet to be born. But he cannot be compared with his pre-

deceutors in the management of the Caliphate. I cannot praise him before God; for He knows him in his true colours. If God pardons him, it is not beyond His mercy. If He punishes him for his sins, I believe He will forgive him in the end.'

When Yezid found his position secure in Syria, he wrote letters to the governors of the various provinces ordering them to take oaths of fealty to himself. Valeed, who was then Governor of Medina, got a similar fiat, but with a special stress; for Yezid knew that his caliphate could not be cordially accepted by the Medinites. It was expressly stated that Valeed had to take such oaths from Abdur Rahman, son of Abu Bakr, Abdulla, son of Omar, Abdulla, son of Zobier, and, in particular, from Husain, son of Ali, and that, if any of these refused or hesitated to acknowledge Yezid as the Caliph, his head should at once be severed and sent to the monarch.

Valeed, in consultation with Merwan, his predecessor, whom Yezid had dismissed from the Governorship and reserved for some graver duty, sent a peon to call the four individuals above-mentioned who had all gathered round the Prophet's sepulchre. The peon reached the spot and announced to them the orders of the Governor; upon which, Husain alone promised to pay a visit to the Government House, to converse with Valeed on the topic of Yezid's succession.

Husain went home and collected all his male relations and slaves and with them he proceeded to the residence of Valeed. But, before crossing the threshold, he ordered his companions to stop there and to rush in to his assistance, when they heard him talk in a loud tone of voice, as a signal of danger.

As soon as Valeed saw Husain, he got up as a mark of respect for the grandson of the Prophet and seated him

on his right side. Merwan was also present on the occasion. Valeed read out the letter of Yezid, the first part of which contained the news of Moawiah's death, and the second portion an order to impose Yezid's sovereignty on the four leaders of Medina, among whose names Husain's was mentioned with a particular stress and to punish those disobeying his order by severing their heads which should be sent to him without any delay.

While reading the letter, Valeed made a sudden pause, as he dared not read the latter portion which contained the order of punishment, by death, of Husain and the three others, in case they refused to take oaths of allegiance to Yezid. He held the letter towards Husain and requested him to read it himself. Husain silently read it and, holding his beard with his hand, nodded his head and said to Valeed 'A man of my stamp cannot either acknowledge or refuse to accept Yezid's sovereignty in secret. Let us gather the Medinites and consult them. If they advise me to accept Yezid as the Caliph, I shall do so in the presence of the gathering. If I am advised otherwise, I cannot comply with your desire.'

Valeed accepted the suggestion; but the notorious Merwan intervened and said 'O Valeed! if the fox escapes and goes beyond the four walls of this hall, you will have to content yourself with nothing but the dust flying from its feet. Lose no time and cut off Husain's head, as no better opportunity can be available to you.' Extremely infuriated at this suggestion, so audacious and immoderate, Husain got up and unsheathing his sword, shouted 'O infidel! can you or this man behead me? No. Never, as long as I possess this sword. You have uttered mere lies.' The Hashimites, who were waiting at the gates, rushed in, on hearing Husain's voice raised so high, and Merwan quickly made his escape through.

another exit on the back side of the building. But Valeed apologized to Husain and led him to the gates.

Husain thought that his residence in Medina would endanger his life. Hence he prepared to leave for Mecca, which is even to-day believed by Moslems to be a place of refuge for all. Within the precincts of the Ka'aba, it is a heinous crime to kill even a bug or a mosquito or to uproot a blade of grass.

Here we have to discuss at some length the attitude of Husain, his resolute and determined refusal to acknowledge Yezid as the Caliph. According to the Koran, the traditions of the Prophet and the practice in vogue among the previous Prophets, the children of an apostle of God inherit the virtues of their father and deserved special consideration of God and His servants. Birth and environment ought to have their influence on one. There may be a few examples quoted to the contrary; but the exceptions themselves prove the rule. The foundation of the evolution theory rests on the fact that, in the reproduction of a certain species, evolution shows itself in the largest measure at least in one of the issue. The advancement in a certain direction is constantly maintained in a particular line of descendants of that best type thus reproduced. Nature wrought its best to produce a perfect man in the person of the Prophet, Muhammad, and this accomplishment of nature cannot be undone or wasted. Among the children of Ismail, the results of the combination of the best types of man, viz., Ali, and the daughter of the Prophet should surpass every individual inhabiting the sandy plains of Arabia; nay, according to the statement of the Prophet, should excel all humanity. 'Hasan and Husain' says the Prophet, according to the Shiah and Sunni tradition, 'are the two chiefs or leaders of all those that shall enter paradise.'

Husain was sure that the seat of his grandfather was the exclusive right of his father, his brother and himself. But, when his father was deprived of his right, in the beginning, he thought that the tender-rooted Islam would soon be eradicated, if any dissension arose by his drawing the sword and punishing those who had transgressed the limits laid down by God and His Prophet. After all, a majority of the masses understood their folly, though too late, and, at a great cost, and accepted him as the true leader of the Islamic commonwealth. But the Satanic seed was still present to germinate and develop and overshadow, though temporarily, the image of God. Ali's life and the Omiade antagonism towards the true religion and its advocates proved what hidden jealousy was capable of doing. The Omiade trickery and time-serving policy again defeated Ali's efforts and Hasan had to retire to private life. Hasan's murder by poison, in spite of his keeping aloof from the temporal affairs, demonstrated the Omiade passion for shedding Hashimite blood, however innocent and uninterfering it might be. In fact, the Omiades fostered an inborn animosity towards the Prophet and his family and their main object was to destroy even the last surviving soul among the Ahlul-Baith and their adherents. Husain had noted that his brother's retirement to private life could not improve the Islamic world and set it thinking to distinguish right from wrong. Even his murder in secret was coolly received by the Arabs and could not bring on a revolution. Husain was sure that he would have to share his elder brother's fate and that the Omiade animosity would pursue and kill him wherever he went. But he desired that his valuable blood should not be so easily shed and his work brought to nothing. He was prepared to suffer martyrdom publicly and reap its fruits for religion. He wanted to show the public how

brutal and irreligious the Omiades were and how shedding human blood, even that of the children of the Prophet, was a crime counted as nothing. He wanted to show to humanity that this world was not the final destination of man and that there was a future life after death for the sake of which one can forego the pleasures of the present life. He wanted to show what stuff the Ahlul-Baith were made of and how they could bear hardship which no human mind can conceive of. Above all he wanted to set a lesson of upholding the right under the most adverse circumstances, in order to please God and thus tread the most difficult path of love and annihilate his separate existence in the All pervading existence, unmindful of the severe persecution he had to suffer at the hands of the devilish folk. His means to this end was not aggression but passive resistance, in order that he might not be blamed for any oppressive act on his part.

Committing suicide is a crime and, according to religious principles, a man cannot voluntarily put his own life in danger, lest he should be accountable before God for this action of his. Thus, Husain's choice to leave Medina, where his stay would have cost him his head, was quite justified. Valeed often sent his men to compel him to accept Yezid's caliphate and to threaten that his refusal would result in his destruction. Husain marched to his grandfather's grave, kissed it and, with tears in his eyes, cried 'O Apostle of Allah! observe what thy son experiences at the hands of thy disciples. If I swear fealty to Yezid, an irreligious drunkard and debauchee, I lose my faith in God and hence become an infidel. If I refuse to do so, I lose my life. Guide me as to what I should do.' He then fell down on the upheaval of the sepulchre and closed his eyes. He saw in a vision his own grandfather, Muhammad, standing as high as his waist out of

the grave. Muhammad embraced him and said 'O Son ! God desireth to see thee killed and thy ladies carried as captives in chains without veils on their faces. God hath reserved a lofty position for thee which thou alone canst reach by the ladder of martyrdom.'

Husain then went to his mother's grave, stood there for some time, kissed it and returned home. He subsequently intimated to all his relations and friends that he was leaving Medina for good. His sister Kulsoom, a widow, was residing with him. But the elder sister, Zainub, the wife of Abdulla, son of Jaffer, was with her husband. As soon as she heard of the proposed departure of her only surviving brother, she requested permission of her husband to accompany Husain. The permission was granted and she soon left her house for that of her brother.

On the appointed day, a large number of ladies and gentlemen of Medina gathered round Husain, some to weep for the separation and others to advise him to give up the idea of leaving Medina. Muhammad-i-Hanafi, a son of Ali, and Abdulla, son of Abbas, two most prominent members of the Hashimite tribe, approached Husain, and the latter said to him 'I remember the prediction of your grandfather who told us that your journey to Iraq would cost you your life. Hence, I think it to be my duty to advise you to shun all idea of leaving Medina.' Husain explained to him his position in Medina and told him what he had heard from the apostle of God in the vision. 'Then,' cried Abdulla, 'You are prepared for death' and began shedding tears. Muhammad then turned towards Husain and said 'When death is certain, why do you take ladies and children along with you in the risky journey?' Zaniub, who was attentively listening to the words of Muhammad, cried in fury 'O Muhammad! what right hast thou to cause separation between myself and my brother.'

Husain then explained to him that it was decreed by God that his martyrdom would not be complete until his own ladies and children suffered the consequences of his murder on a desolate plain. Some of those present requested Husain to consult the Koran and act accordingly. The holy book was sent for and, when it was brought, Husain opened it at random and the first line of the page contained the verse 'Every individual ought to relish the taste of the death.' Husain inferred from this that death was inevitable whether he stayed at Medina or went abroad. For fear of being criticised by the public that, when he was sure of his murder at Medina, he ought to have taken shelter in Mecca and, to be free before God of the blame that he had brought the trouble and ruin on himself, Husain thought it wise to settle within the precincts of the 'Kaaba.' When the Medinites found that nothing could hinder Husain from executing his ideas, they all cried with intense pain. The ladies raised a woeful chorus, saying 'This day we lose from our midst the Prophet, Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain; for, in Husain were alive all the attributes and good qualities of the Prophet and the Ahlul-Baith.' Husain then retired to his holy house to bid farewell to Ummi-Salma, a wife of the Prophet who had attended him in his youth, and Ummal Banin, a wife of Ali and mother of Abbas, Husain's most ardent supporter. Umm-i-Salma said to Hussain 'O Son! How can I be happy to bid you farewell, when I remember the prediction of your grandfather that you would be killed in Iraq.' Husain replied 'Verily I know the day and place of my murder and the person who will accomplish it. I am fully aware of the ultimate results of my journey. There is nothing that can alter the decree of God.' Ummi-i-Salma sighed with intense grief and began weeping. Next, Husain had to bid fare-

well to a young daughter who was laid up with a bad fever. She requested Husain to take her along with him. But the Koranic injunction 'None ailing should any way be molested' prevented Husain from complying with her request. His separation from this daughter and the words that passed between her and the father, as noted down in histories, move even the coldest reader to tears. Thus Husain gave proofs of his most faithful observance of divine injunctions even at such a time that paternal love would have compelled every other person to yield and take the afflicted daughter with him.

Camels with litters on were ready at the door. Husain ordered the ladies to mount. The ladies had mounted with the help of Abbas and Ali, Husain's brother and son, when the grandson of the Prophet came out of his door. A horse was waiting for him. He, in the costume of his grandfather, put a foot in a stirrup and stood for some time thinking. Suddenly, he made a jump on to the croup and, with a frown, said, 'Such is the world that the heads of Zacharias and John the Baptist were sent as presents before drunkards.' This analogy of Husain contained an ocean of Philosophy. To all observers, these words explained the ultimate results of his journey; and to the religious folk, the instability of the world, the hard trials that Godly souls are put to and the transitory luxuries that vicious people enjoy in this world at the cost of eternal blessings.

Husain next turned towards the grave of his grandfather and addressed it, saying 'O grave of the Apostle of God! I never wished to be separated from thee. But I am now compelled to leave thee with a view to prevent bloodshed in the city of thy master.' He then started amidst an uproar of mournful cries of the inhabitants of Medina. He had not gone far, when a rider on horseback

was observed, coming hastily towards him. When the rider approached, Husain stopped and was astonished to find it was Jaffer's son, Abdulla, husband of Zainub, Husain's sister. On being questioned as to what brought him there, he stated, having presented his two sons, Aun and Muhammad, to Husain, 'O Imam! I am an old man, too feeble to face a battle-field. My trembling hands cannot hold the sword. Moreover, the sacrifice of an old ram may not be accepted by God. Hence I have brought my young sons to serve as sacrifices to God, on my behalf. The two brothers-in-law embraced each other and wept before they separated. The two boys went to Zainub who kissed them and was glad to have them to help Husain when their assistance was needed.

After a few days' march, Husain reached Mecca and remained within the precincts of the 'Kaaba'. Apparently he was safe there and there appeared to be nothing to molest his peaceful life engaged in prayers and abstinence.

CHAPTER IX

HUSAIN AT MECCA

THE Meccans received Husain very cordially. Zobier's son had already settled at Mecca and had gained some influence there. But the presence of the Prophet's grandson changed the minds of the Meccans, who were drawn by religious obligation towards him and showed a great zeal to have him among themselves. In the usual service, he was presiding five times a day and even Abdulla, son of Zobier, was compelled to pay his respects to Husain frequently, though with some reluctance; for he too was fostering ideas of the leadership of Hedjaz. Husain never attempted to gain any land or disturb the Government by any rebellious movement, in spite of the love and power he was commanding at Mecca. He only lectured to his disciples on the various rites and ceremonies of Islam inculcated by the Koran and the Prophet, on the allowable and objectionable articles of food, and on ethical principles. His chief aim was to train people to be godly and pious and strict observers of the Islamic principles. The more he heard of the irreligion of Yezid, the greater was his zeal in ordering his disciples to follow the Koranic injunctions. He feared that the Arabs, who had long been accustomed to idolatry and irreligion, headed by an atheistic monarch, would easily be misled and thus the success achieved by his father and grandfather in training them to be pious servants of God would be lost for ever.

Yezid was fond of poetry and he used his talents in rhetoric in condemning and making fun of the Prophet and the Koran. In an intoxicated mood, he made a pun

on the Koranic verse, 'Cursed be the worshippers that put off their service till late.' He read out a couplet composed by himself, saying, 'Thy Lord never said, Cursed be the drunkards,' but has said, 'Cursed be the worshippers,' artfully omitting the clause, 'That put off their service till late.'

On another occasion, he ridiculed the Prophet in a couplet saying, 'No Gabriel descended nor was any message revealed to him. It was all a game played by a son of Hashim.' This open declaration of Yezid's revolt from Islam and his ridicule in public both of the Koran and the Prophet shocked the heart of Husain; for there was none in Arabia whom such things affected more than the grandson of the Prophet.

When Yezid cared naught for the Prophet and the Koran, what would prevent him from desecrating and disparaging the sanctity of the 'Kaaba'? Husain was sure that Yezid, in the height of his antagonism against himself, would care very little for the 'Kaaba' and would not hesitate to murder him within its precincts. But he stopped there to wait until things took their natural course.

The Kufians, fully aware of Yezid's irreligious mind and his immoral conduct, wished to have Husain among them as their spiritual leader. But they have always been wanting in fixity of character. Their unfaithfulness has become proverbial, so much so that the inhabitants of a town whose name begins with 'K' are accused of an ungrateful nature, whether rightly or wrongly. Kufa being a fertile and prosperous country, it had specially attracted Moawiah and he tried to squeeze out as much wealth from it as was possible. The Kufians were disgusted with the oppressive nature of the Omiade rule and the ignorance of the governors in religious matters. Sometimes letters

were written to the so called Caliph as to the inability of the Governors to perform the daily service properly. Even a change could not satisfy them; as the new Governors were no better than their predecessors. The Kufians waited for an opportunity and Yezid's assumption of the Caliphate produced an out-burst of indignation. When they heard of Husain's determined refusal to acknowledge Yezid as the Caliph, they tried to open negotiations with the grandson of the Prophet. They attempted to invite him to their country for their spiritual guidance.

A number of such dissatisfied individuals of Kufa met at the house of Ibn-i-Sard, an associate of the Prophet, and swore to assist Husain with their persons and ail they possessed. They unanimously resolved to submit a petition to Husain signed by the leading persons in the land, viz., Sulaiman, son of Sard, Musaiyab, son of Nakkhaba, Rufia, son of Shidad, and Habib, son of Muzahir. The petition was worded as follows:—

‘Thank God! Your cruel and oppressive foe is no more (alluding to the death of Moawiah). We do not attend the meetings convened by Yezid's governor nor do we worship behind him on Fridays. Please come over here to guide us. The moment you turn this side, we shall expel the governor out of Kufa.’

Abdulla, son of Saba and Abdulla, son of Dal, were appointed to carry the application. On the 10th of Ramzan 60 A. H., they reached Mecca and presented the petition to Husain. Subsequently, began a train of such petitions and, within a few days, no less than five hundred and thirty-one of such petitions were received, some signed by one, some by two, some by three and others by four, through Quees bin Mushir, Abdur Rahman bin Abdulla and Omara bin Obaid. Husain also received some more signed by Shees bin Rabi, Hazar bin Hur,

Yezid bin Haris, Yezid bin Adeem, Urva bin Quees, Amr bin Hajjaj, Muhammad bin Omair and others. The subject matter of these petitions was as follows:--

‘Everything has been arranged and an organized army is waiting for your assistance. Please make haste and come to us. You will be a criminal before God, if you do not comply with our request, for our aims are religious. It is your duty as an Imam to guide us in the path of God when we invite you.’

All the previous letters could not move Husain and he did not reply to any of them. But, when he was criticised in the last letter for his silence and blamed for irreligion, should he not proceed to Kufa and guide its ignorant children, he thought it his duty to reply and, sending for ink and paper, he penned the following lines:—

‘In the name of God, the Most Merciful and Compassionate, this letter is written by Husain, son of Ali, to the believers and Moslems of Kufa. Hani and Saied brought to me your last letters. From these and your previous letters, I understand your unanimous declaration that you have no Imam for your guidance.’ I considered all my relations and friends, but found none more learned and pious than my cousin Muslim, son of Akheel (Ali’s brother). I am sending him to you and have commanded him to intimate to me your real affairs. If he writes to me that most of you are desirous of following the right path and of supporting the truth and if the wise and virtuous among you unanimously agree with you as you have represented in your letters, I shall be soon among you, God willing. I should like to enlighten your minds with the fact that an Imam or true guide is one who acts according to the divine precepts, keeps himself steady on the path of justice and righteousness and who binds himself with the laws laid down by God and His Prophet.’

From the innumerable letters of the Kufians and this one reply of Husain, a thoughtful reader can understand that, though they had even promised military assistance to him, yet, as his ideas were purely holy and religious, he dropped that question altogether and only contented himself with promising to guide them spiritually and that too when he feared that he was answerable to God, if he did not reply to them and satisfy their religious desire, if they really had it. He was not provoked by their promises to raise the standard of rebellion; but adopted the wisest plan possible in trying to test their genuineness by despatching a relation of his who, in his opinion, was qualified to test and guide them in the path of God.

Muslim was then with Husain, but his family was still in Medina. When Husain handed him the letter with an order to proceed to Kufa, he first went to Medina and shortly afterwards returned with his family. He had married a daughter of Ali and own sister of Abbas and had four sons by her. He left his wife and the two elder sons with Husain and marched with the two younger ones to Kufa.

As he had to proceed by a bye-route, he took two Beduin guides, inhabitants of the suburbs of Mecca. But it so happened that the guides lost their way and the caravan landed in a sandy desert where no water was available. The Beduins ran here and there in search of water but could find it nowhere. In despair, they perished. But Muslim somehow succeeded in reaching a village where water could be found. Here he washed their bodies and had them interred.

Muslim thought this incident to be inauspicious for his journey and sent a note to Husain through a messenger, stating the occurrence to be a bad omen. But Husain replied by saying that the Prophet and his Ahlul-Baith.

had never been guided by omens and hence a man's decision as to his undertakings should be in accordance with the dictates of his conscience. Muslim was consequently ordered to proceed, unmindful of any fear of losing his life, and accomplish the task for which he was deputed. He completed his journey in spite of difficulties and reached Kufa. He stayed there as a guest in the house of Mukthar, son of Abu-Obedai Saqafi, who spared no pains in showing hospitality to this relation of the Prophet.

As soon as the Kufians heard of Muslim's arrival, great crowds came to him to acknowledge Husain as their spiritual leader, by taking oaths of allegiance on the hand of Muslim, so much so that, within a few days, the number was calculated to be eighty thousand. Muslim used to preside in the mosque daily and lecture to them on religious topics. With this host, he could have easily upset the government; but he never attempted to revolt or disturb the prevailing peace.

Noman bin Basheer, Yezid's Governor at Kufa, noted all this and never tried to discourage Muslim's mission, as it was purely holy and religious and not calculated to undermine the government in any way. Though people accused him of cowardice and timidity, he replied to them he would not interfere with the movement until it caused any provocation by the violation of laws of peace and tranquillity. But a number of the advocates of the Omiade cause wrote several letters to Yezid, stating the success of Muslim's mission and the weakness of Noman bin Basheer to suppress it. In Yezid's credulous and suspicious nature this raised a number of fearful pictures, and he thought that Muslim's success would be ruinous to his hold on the Islamic dominions.

After consulting with one of his slaves, Yezid wrote a letter to Obeidulla, son of Ziad, a man of unknown birth

whom Moawiah had owned as a brother to serve his own ends (as he was extraordinarily trickish and cruel), ordering him to take charge of the Governorship of Kufa. This Obeidulla was already the governor of Bassorah and now his province extended to Kufa also without interfering with his hold on the former dominion. Yezid explicitly stated in his letter, 'You are the best arrow which I can shoot towards my enemies. Hence I order you to lose no time in proceeding to Kufa. Murder Ali's descendants without sparing a single soul among them. Search out Muslim, as one searches out a lost jewel, behead him and send his head to my court.'

On the receipt of this letter, Obeidulla at once started for Kufa. When he came in sight of the turrets of the city, he stopped and changed his dress and put on a garb like the one Husain usually wore. With a veil on his face, he entered the city. People who were expecting Husain mistook him for the grandson of the Prophet and most respectfully saluted him. They expressed their joy to have the Prophet's grandson in their city to guide them in the path of God. But, when he reached the Government House, he suddenly removed the veil and entered the gates, to the great astonishment of the Kufians. He subsequently ordered his servants to roam about the streets of the city and to announce that the new Governor wanted to address the inhabitants of Kufa in the Mosque. Myriads of people gathered and Obeidulla mounted on the pulpit and began threatening the people, saying, 'Your men will be mowed down and your ladies taken as captives, if you associate with, or in any way help, Muslim. On the other hand, Yezid's supporters will be rewarded amply, if they succeed in suppressing Husain's deputy.' On hearing this, people began gazing at one another and silently returned home. In the evening

prayers, Muslim found none accompanying him. He found out the cause of the mischief and silently passed through one of the streets until he reached the house of Hani-ibni-Urva, who, ill as he had been, was glad to have him in his house.

Obeidulla was a friend of Hani and used to visit him every now and then to enquire about his health. He had sent word to Hani that he proposed to visit him on a certain day. On the appointed day, Hani gave instructions to Muslim to hide himself in a room, sword in hand, and, when Obeidulla was talking to him, to rush forth and stab him to death. As was arranged, Obeidulla came to Hani's house and was engaged in a friendly chat. Hani signalled to Muslim by singing an appropriate song for the occasion asking him to give a finishing stroke to that inveterate foe of the family of the Prophet. But Muslim confined himself to his room and never came out of it. After a short time, Obeidulla left and Hani questioned Muslim as to his silence and failure to accomplish the suggested murder. But Muslim replied, 'The Prophet and his Ahlul-Baith have never been aggressors; and hence I did not wish to kill one who is a Muslim, though only in name, and has not hitherto committed a similar act so that I should pay him in the same coin.'

Obeidulla then tried to find Muslim. 'But for a few days he was not successful in his efforts. He had a slave, Mekhal by name, whom he admired for his clever tricks. Mekhal took a purse containing a thousand silver coins and moved about the streets disguising himself as a messenger from Husain. He secretly asked the Kufians to show him where Muslim was, so that he might hand over the purse which, he said, was given him by Husain to be taken to his cousin at Kufa. Some guileless friends of Muslim believed his words and led him to the house of

Hani, stating that he was lodging there unobserved by others, for fear of being discovered by Obeidulla. Mekhal reached the presence of Muslim, and, with an assumed respectfulness, kissed his feet and presented the purse, saying that it was sent to him by Husain. He then went to Obeidulla and informed him of the whereabouts of Muslim. The Governor at once sent word to Hani, requesting him to pay a visit to the Government House. Hani pleaded illness at first; but was afterwards compelled to go to Obeidulla on account of his repeated requests. When Hani entered Obeidulla's palace, the inhospitable host suddenly remarked, 'The two legs of the thief have brought him to my court.' Hani got perplexed at this open and unexpected censure and said, 'O Amir! I extremely wonder to hear such words from you.' 'Where is Muslim?' questioned Obeidulla reproachfully. 'I have no knowledge of him,' replied Hani. Then Obeidulla produced Mekhal and asked him to state where he had seen Muslim. The slave revealed all he had witnessed. Hani was ashamed at the disclosure of the secret and explained slyly, 'O Amir! I did not invite Muslim to my house; but, when he has come to me of his own accord, it does not become an Arab of my stamp to hand over my guest to an enemy of his to be murdered.' 'I shall break open your stomach,' said Obeidulla in great fury, 'and drag him out of it.' 'You cannot do that,' replied Hani, 'as long as I am alive.' On this, Obeidulla brought down his mace on Hani's face, which hurt it a little. Hani drew out his sword and rushed towards Obeidulla. The cowardly governor ran away crying to his military attendants for help and the arrest of Hani. The soldiers intervened and attempted to arrest Hani; but the latter, though weak and in a convalescent state, charged the enemy and left twenty-five killed on the spot before he

was arrested. All the while, he was crying 'Not a youth of the Prophet's family will I hand over to you as long as I am alive.' At last he was captured and bound in chains. When he was taken before Obeidulla, the coward now gave Hani a heavy blow on the head with a heavy rod of iron. Hani cried, 'Praised be the Lord. O Apostle of God! witness how I give my life for a relation of thine.' Though Obeidulla gave him several more blows, he bore them all patiently and never again uttered a word, until he fell down lifeless on the ground. The body was then thrown into an underground cell, near the bloody governor's palace.

While this was going on in the palace, Hani's tribesmen numbering about 4,000 surrounded the Government House and cried in fury that they would certainly attack it, if Hani was harmed in any way. Obeidulla peeped from the balcony and sent word to them through Khadi Shuriah that Hani was alive and they need not fear for him and that the Governor had detained him to elicit some facts connected with the state affairs. The tribesmen scattered foolishly trusting the Governor's word. But the facts somehow leaked out, when the zeal of the tribesmen had gradually decreased.

Muslim left Hani's house just after the latter was summoned by Obeidulla. In a pensive mood, he was trudging along one of the streets when he observed an aged lady sitting at the threshold of her house. Muslim stopped there and, when the lady questioned him as to what made him pause, he gave his name and relationship with the Prophet and requested her to give him a lodging in her house until complete darkness prevailed all over the earth. This lady's name was Thoua and she belonged to the well-known family of generous Hathim that was much attached to the Ahlul-Baith. She readily acceded to

his request and thought she was very fortunate to give shelter to Ali's nephew. But her husband was a servant of Obeidulla and her son a lawless wretch. Only a few hours had elapsed when the wicked boy entered the house and was glad to find Muslim there. Though the mother spared no pains to advise him to keep the matter secret, the irreligious youth ran to Obeidulla and cried out, 'Good news! Muslim is in my house.' Obeidulla at once rewarded him with a few precious jewels and ordered some soldiers to keep watch on the house. Muslim was engaged in prayers a great part of the night and had a little nap before the dawn broke. When Thousa took water in a pot for Muslim to perform his ablution for the morning prayers, he told her about a vision he saw during the nap, that the Prophet and Ali, appeared to him and said 'We are anxiously waiting for you. Come and join us in Paradise.'

While Muslim was talking to the old lady, he heard the tramp of the horses. He soon performed his morning prayers. He noted the number of horsemen increasing and surrounding the house and some even attempting to break it open. He put on his mail coat and took his sword. As he rushed from the house, the cowardly soldiers numbering five hundred under Muhammad, son of Ashas, fell back in disorder, as they found it extremely difficult to face a desperate Hashimite, well skilled in the use of weapons. Muslim gallantly attacked them, fearless of their number. He brought down many heads and left many bodies rolling in blood on the ground. Thrice did Muhammad, son of Ashas, send for succour and thrice did he get it, each time as many soldiers as he had first at his command. With the last reinforcement, Obeidulla sent word to Muhammad, saying that he wondered that such a huge number was not able to arrest or kill a single indivi-

dual. Muhammad replied, ' You have not sent us to face an ordinary shop-keeper; but to encounter a lion of the family of Hashim. You would know the real state of things were you present on the spot.' When the faint-hearted soldiers could not approach the valiant son of Hashim, they got upon roofs and shamefully threw down lighted bundles of reeds and canes aiming thereby to burn him alive. Though severely wounded in the face and body and injured by fire, Muslim delayed not in charging the cowardly mob. When the commander found that his troop had failed in every art of soldiery, he had recourse to mean and trickish methods, the last weapon of the Omiades. The soldiers dug a pit far behind themselves and deceitfully covered it with sticks and straw. When Muslim was advancing after every attack, they fell back little by little, until they came to the deceitful spot. They artfully divided themselves so as to pass the pit without themselves falling into it. But Muslim, unaware of the trick, continued his onward march and fell down into it. The mob with agility picked up his fallen sword and bound him in chains.

Muslim was being dragged to the palace of Obeidulla, when, overpowered with a burning thirst, he requested a bystander to supply him with a cup of water. When a cup was presented to him, he took it to his lips. But alas! the contact with cold water brought down some of his teeth and the whole cup was full of blood. He threw it down, saying to himself, ' O Muslim! thy share of water in this world is no more.'

Though faint with loss of blood and totally fallen into the hands of his enemies, he marched with his usual demeanour and, when he was brought to the presence of Obeidulla, he did not debase himself by saluting the tyrant. One of Obeidulla's associates questioned Muslim

as to why he did not salam the Amir. 'My Amir' returned Muslim 'is Husain and none else.' 'Whether you salute or not,' said Obeidulla, 'you will be beheaded today.' 'That is what I expect,' remarked Muslim, 'from a tyrant like you.'

Obeidulla then ordered one of his executioners to take him to the topmost roof, to cut off his head and throw down the body. Muslim asked of the audience if there was any Quraishi among them whom he could entrust with a few dying words. Omar, son of Saad, came out, saying that he was a Quraishi and would like to hear what Muslim had to say. Muslim said, 'I have written to Husain that our mission has succeeded in Kufa and I have asked him to come to me here. You had better send word to him that, as the Kufians have proved faithless, he should give up all idea of coming here.'

Omar said, 'We want him here so that he might suffer a fate like yours and we shall not write to him as desired by you.'

Muslim next said, 'I owe seven hundred coins to the inhabitants of Kufa. Sell my horse and my armour and pay back the dues.'

'We shall see,' said Omar, 'if we can.'

Muslim then said, 'Bury my body after I am slain.'

Omar replied, 'We will do at a time we shall think suitable for it.'

Muslim was taken upon the roof and was asked to present his neck to receive the mortal blow. But he refused, saying, 'I am not so liberal as to share your sins. I cannot, of my own accord, take part in my own murder and thus be accountable before God for helping my murderer in his crime.'

The brutal hand of the executioner was raised and suddenly his sword was brought down on Muslim's neck,

thereby severing the head from his body. The body was thrown on the ground below and the head taken to Obeidulla.

In course of time, the heads of Hani and Muslim were sent as presents to Yezid. To the legs of the corpses chains were tied and the bodies were dragged through the streets of the city with the proclamation that such would be the fate of all those supporting Husain.

Then Obeidulla had recourse to a most brutal act. He ordered that a search should be made for the young sons of Muslim, who were in course of time found in the house of one Haris. This Haris, in the hope of obtaining a sumptuous reward, committed the crime of beheading the poor innocent orphans near the river flowing by his house.

CHAPTER X.

HUSAIN LEAVES MECCA

HUSAIN diligently kept on his religious work at Mecca until the approach of the month of Zilhajja caused Muslims from different quarters to gather in the city for the annual Haj pilgrimage. Most of those that entered the city first paid their respects to the grandson of the Prophet, some by kissing his hands and others his feet. If Husain had ever wished to acquire the temporal government, this was the best opportunity for him. He could have, through his eloquence, convinced those thousands at Mecca of his rights of inheritance and personal accomplishments and excited those innumerable pilgrims to raise a standard of crusade against the tyrannical ruler. But, like the Prophet and other members of the Ahlul-Baith, he never changed his peaceful attitude.

Some of the Arabs, whose chief aim in life was only to satisfy their stomachs, wondered to find no goats or camels in Husain's camp for the annual sacrifice. Fearing the loss of their usual share of meat from the Prophet's family, they came to him and questioned him, saying, 'Your grandfather Muhammad, your father Ali and your brother Hasan used to bring goats and camels for the annual sacrifice; but we find none accompanying you.' 'I have,' replied Husain, 'My sacrifices with me.' The answer did not satisfy those slaves of appetite, as they found no animal in Husain's camp, and they repeatedly asked him to show his sacrifices for the Haj pilgrimage. When their curiosity reached this degree, Husain cried to his brother Abbas, his son Ali, his nephews Khasim, A'un

and Muhammad and his other relations and, when they came, he declared, pointing to them, 'Here are my sacrifices which I will perform at my own Haj pilgrimage.' This statement was above the heads of those rude children of the Desert, who waited to see what he meant by it.

Yezid was informed of Husain's prestige at Mecca and he again suspected, though against facts and against Husain's nature, that the huge gathering might, after the pilgrimage was over, be encouraged by Husain to launch a rebellion against him and deprive him of the caliphate, which he so undeservedly held. Consequently, he despatched with the caravan of the Syrian pilgrims a band of thirty soldiers of experience, with daggers underneath their cloaks, with a view to stab Husain to death, while he was engaged in performing the seven circuits round the Ka'aba, a compulsory item of the pilgrimage. Husain somehow came to know of the plot. He feared that, should this take place, the sanctity of the Ka'aba would be spoiled. Moreover, his murder in secret would not answer his purpose. Yezid might possibly deny having had a hand in it and settle the blood feud thus created by slaying the single culprit who would accomplish the murder.

Husain thus prepared to leave Mecca and it is a strange coincidence that, on the 8th of Zilhajja, the day on which Muslim was beheaded in Kufa, the grandson of the Prophet set off from Mecca, without performing the Haj pilgrimage, though its date was approaching fast. Abdulla, son of Abbas, and Husain's other friends and admirers who were there for the pilgrimage again detained him for a few hours in advising him, as they had done at Medina, to give up all idea of proceeding to Kufa. They tried to convince him of the disloyalty displayed by the Kufians in the time of his father Ali and his brother Hasan. But no such remonstrances could have any effect on him, as

he was determined to respond to the call of sacred duty at Kufa. He said, 'I should not like to be blamed by Allah for shrinking from the religious duty of training people to be godly and pious. If the Kufians prove disloyal and if I am killed in the discharge of my duty, my position will be much nearer God and they will be held responsible for their disloyalty and evil deeds.'

The royal authorities, who were instructed to keep Husain at Mecca for the success of Yazid's treacherous plot, came to him and, with an assumed mildness, requested him to stop there for the performance of the Haj pilgrimage on the ninth and tenth of Zilhajja. But he openly rejected their request, saying, 'I will not be the ram with whose blood the sanctity of the shrine would be marred.'

Husain, with his ladies and children and a small retinue of disciples, set off from Mecca and, after a day's march came to a place called Thaigham. Here Abdulla, son of Jaffer, who had come to Mecca for the Haj pilgrimage, met Husain and advised his two young sons to be loyal to their uncle, the Imam of the day, even though it might cost their lives. The next morning, Husain resumed his march and came to a place named Zathul-Araq after a hill called Araq in its vicinity. Here the famous poet of Arabia, Farzaduq, happened to see Husain. He was hastily marching to Mecca with his mother when the sight of a number of tents attracted him. He inquired and soon learnt that the Prophet's grandson had temporarily lodged there for the night. He came to Husain to pay his respects to him and found him engaged in reciting the Koran. Farzaduq blessed Husain, saying, 'May may parents be sacrificed for thee and may God grant all thy prayers,' and begged to know why he had left Mecca at a time when the day of pilgrimage was so close. Husain returned the

blessing and replied, 'Had I not quitted Mecca, I would have been either arrested or killed.' He then asked Farzaduq if he had any news of Kufa; to which the latter responded, 'The hearts of the Kufians love thee. Their tongues praise thee; but, when the time of test comes, their swords will be drawn against thy face to murder thee.' Husain replied, 'You have stated the facts which I am fully aware of; God is Almighty and His powerful hand controls everything. But we praise Him both in prosperity and adversity. We are prepared to receive whatever comes from His hands.' Farzaduq admired the sublime reply and left his presence for the pilgrimage, after enquiring about some points connected with the ceremonies of the Haj.

After the third day's march, Husain reached Sa'labiah, now a ruined village. Here a man, Abu-Hurra by name, met him and enquired as to the cause that made him leave the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina. Husain explained to him in these words, 'O Abu-Hurra! the Omiades usurped my rights and I bore it patiently. They abused me openly on pulpits and I suffered their abuse without a grudge. Now they intend to murder me, which they will certainly do, and the wrath of God will descend on them for their crime and will keep them submissive under drawn swords. God will appoint tyrants to rule over them and, under the sovereignty of one worse than a woman, they will be dishonoured more than the inhabitants of Sheba.'

Another gentleman of note that chanced to see Husain here was Thirmah, son of Hakam. He had left his house to collect food-stuffs and other necessities of life for the ensuing year and was returning home with the stock. When he heard of Husain's stay there, he paid a visit to him. While talking, he said, 'Lest you should fall a prey

to the Kufians, I think it my duty to reveal facts to you. I assure you solemnly that, if you enter Kufa, you will certainly lose your life; nay I think you will not be able to reach its borders, as arrangements have been made to meet you on the way and do you to death. Hence, I advise you to change your direction and proceed to Yemen, where the fortification on the hill of 'Jabal-i-Ajau' will sufficiently protect you from your enemies. By God! it is a stronghold that we have never yielded to our strongest foes as long as we have been there. During your stay there, my tribesmen (relations of Hathim, the Generous) will help you to the best of their means.' Husain replied, 'There has been an agreement between myself and the Kufians, that I should stay among them for their guidance in religious affairs. I think it beneath my dignity to break my pledges. If I successfully discharge my duty, I shall thank God; otherwise, I shall succeed in attaining martyrdom, God willing.'

From here, Husain despatched a messenger, Abdulla, son of Yaqthar by name, to Kufa ordering him to send news about Muslim and other affairs of the place.

In this world of cause and effect, Husain never made use of knowledge acquired by revelations and spiritual insight. According to Moslem belief, he knew all that had taken place in the past and what had still to occur in the future. But, in setting lessons of dutifulness and self-denial, he brought himself down to the level of an ordinary being and never took advantage of his unbounded knowledge and the unlimited power at his disposal. The coincidence of the dates of Muslim's murder in Kufa and Husain's starting from Mecca is sufficient evidence of the holy Imam's spiritual knowledge, of which he did not speak to his disciples; but he went on through all adverse events and hard trials, like one knowing nothing of what

was going on in the world abroad and what had still to take place.

The next morning Husain again set off towards Kufa, but found Yezid's guards watching the various roads leading to countries other than Kufa. They had been posted there by the son of Ziad to watch Husain's movements, to take him straight to Kufa shutting all other roads against him and to prevent others from joining him. Haseen-bin-Nameer had made Kadesia the centre of his activities and it was he who was making arrangements to conduct Husain to Kufa, in obedience to the orders of Obeidulla, son of Ziad.

Husain next halted at Wakhesia, which was full of Syrian soldiers to watch him and compel him to take the road to Kufa. Here he sent a man to call Zohair-ibni-Qies Bajalli to his camp. This Zohair was a respectable gentleman of Kufa and head of the tribe of Nakheela and had been coming from Mecca just behind Husain camping at a distance from him, for fear of being persecuted by the Omiade soldiers. When Husain's man called at his tent, he was at his table for breakfast with some of his tribesmen. But, when he and his tribesmen heard of Husain's invitation, they all hung their heads in embarrassment and gave no reply. Suddenly, Zohair's wife Dailam appeared on the spot and rebuked them, saying, 'Shame on you! the son of the Apostle of God sends for you through his own messenger; but you still linger and do not respond to his call.' This reproach and criticism from a lady shamed Zohair, who at once started from his camp and reached Husain's presence.

After a short conversation with Husain, he returned to his own tent with immense joy and satisfaction and ordered his tents to be removed from there and pitched

near those of the Prophet's grandson. He then went to his wife and proposed to divorce her, saying that he did not like her to fall a captive in the hands of the irreligious folks of Syria after his own murder along with Husain. He made her a gift of all he possessed and asked his tribesmen to take her to her father's house. At the moment of the proposed separation, the pious lady, while bidding farewell to her husband, said, 'May God bless thee. Remember to speak favourably of me before the grandfather of Husain, when thou shalt reach his presence. But, when thou enjoyest the blessings of Husain's company, why should I not be benefitted by being in the presence of his sisters, the daughters of Ali?' This again had a magic effect on Zohair's mind, who then came out of his tent and, calling all his tribesmen, gave them the choice of either accompanying him to Husain's camp or of returning to their houses. Thenceforward he remained in the company of Husain and his wife Dailam with Zainub, Ali's daughter.

Husain again started from Wakhesia and, after a long march, halted at a place called Khuzaimiah. Near the village of Ramal, there was a palace called Khuzaimiah round which poor people had constructed petty dwellings and subsequently a new village had grown up, called Khuzaimiah after the name of the palace. This village is otherwise known as Zard-roud. Here Husain stopped for a day and night. During his stay, he noted a man on horseback going hastily past his tents. He sent two of his disciples Abdulla bin Sulaiman and Munzir bin Ismail, members of the Bani Asad tribe, to call the rider to his presence. They overtook him and asked who he was and whence he came. He said he was Bakr and was also connected with the Bani Asad tribe. He then began to state what he had seen himself at Kufa, whence he was

now coming. He narrated the story of the horrible murder of Muslim and Hani, to which we have already referred. When questioned about Abdulla bin Yaqthar, Husain's messenger to Kufa, he said as follows:—

‘On his way, the soldiers of Haseen bin Nameer arrested him and took him before their officer. A search of his goods was made and a letter was found written by Husain to some of the leading inhabitants of Kufa. Abdulla bin Yaqthar hastily tore the letter to pieces and refused to give the names of the addressees. His hands were then tied up to his neck and he was sent to the court of Obeidulla to be dealt with according to the Omiade sense of justice. Infuriated at the sight of Husain's messenger, the tyrannical governor ordered him to state the names of the addressees and to curse Ali and his descendants. The messenger refused to obey the first order and agreed to the second. He then went up the pulpit and, contrary to the orders of Obeidulla, he began praising Ali and his children and poured forth volleys of curses on the Omiades. Obeidulla's anger now knew no bounds and Abdulla was pulled down and severely beaten and taken to the topmost roof of the building and from there he was thrown down to the ground. His bones were smashed to pieces and he died after a few minutes, in consequence of the injuries he received from the fall.’

The two gentlemen, Abdulla and Munzir, were so much struck with terror and filled with grief that they could not relate to Husain what they had heard of Kufa and the sad occurrences of the place. But, when Husain left Khuzaimiah and made his sixth halt at Zobala, they recovered a little from their extreme sorrow and narrated to Husain what Bakr had told them at Khuzaimiah. Two other gentlemen, Hilal bin Nafi and Omar bin Khalid, also brought similar news to him. Husain's heart was so

much grieved with the painful information he received of Muslim, Hani and Abdulla bin Yaqthar, that he made a long pause here to observe mourning at his bereavement. He called the two elder sons of Muslim, left to his care, and told them, 'Enough for you the loss of your beloved father. Now retrace your steps to Medina and lead peaceful lives there.' The valiant boys replied, 'No, uncle! we shall either avenge the blood of our father or take the course trodden by him.' Husain commended their bravery, saying, 'No pleasure can there be in life after these are lost.' He then entered the tent of the ladies. He had a daughter Amina by name, who is better known as Sukaina. She came running to him as usual to sit in his lap; but he refused to accept her this time and said, 'Call to me, the daughter of Muslim.' When she came, he took her in his arms, embraced her with tears in his eyes and ordered that a pair of ear-rings should be put on her ears. When this was done, he kissed her and was passing tenderly his hand over her head and back, when the little intelligent girl found out the cause of Husain's favours and said, 'Uncle! why is it that you pass your hand on my head and back as you often do with orphans?' The query shocked the heart of Husain who consoled her, saying, 'Dear niece! from this day, I am your father.' For fear of injuring the feelings of the girl and calling back to her memory the paternal love of Muslim, Husain never afterwards kissed Sukaina, his own daughter, in the presence of Ruqaia.

Now, the number of Husain's companions had reached several thousands. Most of these were under the impression that he was making the tedious journey, with a view to acquire lands and become the absolute monarch of Arabia. In the hope of gaining plunder and spoils of war, they had approached him and were marching along

the irksome way. He now wanted to lay the bare facts before them, lest he should afterwards be blamed for guileful conduct. He, therefore, called all those who had gathered under his banner and gave a pathetic address, saying, ' You have witnessed what has befallen us. It is the nature of time to create constant changes. Virtue is vanishing fast and vice is surviving. A time has come when the believer cannot aim at virtue but through death and the infidel at his cherished vice but through life. I warn you that all those that lack the courage to endure the wounds of swords and lances should abandon our ranks and leave us to our fate.'

He had not finished his speech, when a large number of the faithless folk was seen deserting him and marching off in various directions.

Imam Zain-ul-a'bidin, the eldest son of Husain, who had inherited royal blood both from his father and his mother, Shahi Zenan better known as Shahr Banu of Persia, was so much affected by the unprovoked murder of his uncle Muslim, that he put on his armour and other weapons of war with a burning desire to avenge the innocent blood. The seriousness of the incident and the scorching sun of Arabia shining mercilessly on the steel excited his blood to a high feverish state and when he reached Karbala, the high temperature had made him delirious.

Husain then retired to his tent and lay down on his bed, extremely grieved at and seriously thinking over the loss of Muslim, when his second son Ali appeared before him. Noticing a sort of break-down in his father, the son dragged himself close to him and stood gazing, as if he wanted to give vent to his ideas, if permitted. The father conjectured the son's desire to speak and allowed him to state his ideas. ' Father !' said the son, ' are we not in the right ?' ' By God !' replied the father, ' we have ever

been in the right?' 'When it is so', again said the son meekly, 'what fear have we to give our lives for the right?' This query of the son and his readiness to uphold the right created a renewed vigour in Husain who blessed the boy, saying, 'May Benevolence reward thee on behalf of me, as no son has ever been rewarded through his father.' Husain got up at once and ordered his camels to be ready for his onward march and started once again towards Kufa.

On the way, Husain found some wells and ponds and ordered his disciples to fill all the leathern bags and other vessels with water. They did not understand the cause of this and humbly represented that, on their way to Kufa, water could be found in abundance and now there was no need of taking water. Husain still insisted and his order was promptly obeyed. After a short march, the little caravan was about to reach a place called Ashraf when one of Husain's disciples cried out 'Allah-O-Akbar!' (God is Great), an expression uttered by Moslems when they note some incident exciting astonishment. Husain asked him the cause of the shouting 'Allah-O-Akbar' at that particular moment. He explained saying, 'I have often passed this spot, the last time only recently, but I have never witnessed a garden of date palms here, which I now observe.' 'Look well', said Husain, 'and tell me what it is.' 'To add to my astonishment,' replied the disciple, 'the garden of the palms is not stationary but appears to move.' 'Cast a more careful glance,' suggested Husain. After a few moments, the disciple replied 'O son of the Apostle of God! it is not a garden, but I see a number of mounted soldiers, with lances resting on their shoulders marching towards us.'

Within a few hours, a thousand horsemen, under the command of one Hur, son of Yezid-i-Riahi, were seen approaching Husain's caravan in quite a helpless state.

tormented by the unbearable sun and a burning thirst. The horses were panting with their tongues out and the soldiers fainting. Husain ordered his men to pitch the tents and stop there. As Hur dragged himself to Husain, the latter was about to question him as to his intentions, when he cried in an impatient tone, 'If you can, please first quench our thirst and thus save our lives ; afterwards I shall tell you why I came.' Husain then ordered his men to supply the soldiers of Hur with as much water as they needed. The men and horses were drinking, when Husain noticed a soldier who was unable to drink out of the leathern bag. When he attempted to open it, water was flowing out with a rush. Husain went near him, lifted up the mouth of the bag, adjusted it so as to make a narrow tube of it and then asked the soldier to quench his thirst. Then Hur thanked Husain and said, 'The horses too had enough of water, as they have lifted up their heads from it.' But Husain said, 'Horses are not satisfied until they have drunk thrice and lifted up their heads from the water thrice.'

By this time, the sun had crossed the meridian and the Crier in Husain's camp shouted his call for the afternoon prayer. When Husain stood up for service followed by his little band, Hur also joined him and performed his prayer behind his back. After a few minutes Hur began to explain the object with which he was despatched. He read out a letter written by Obeidulla, son of Ziad, ordering him to surround Husain and take him straight to Kufa, and expressed his readiness to execute the orders of the governor. 'Your death will overtake you,' said Husain reproachfully, 'ere you succeed in your intention,' and gave the word of command to his men to ride. The small band was about to march when Husain came first and took the lead. Hur's soldiers blocked the road and

and attempted to intercept them; but Husain went on making his way through the crowd, when Hur himself came forward and held the reins of Husain's horse with a view to turn it towards Kufa. Husain unsheathed his sword and rebuked him, saying 'May thy mother mourn over thy loss; how durst thou hold the reins of my horse?' Hur let it go and, though full of anger and shame for hearing his mother spoken of so publicly, he meekly said, 'O Husain, had any one else spoken the name of my mother, I would have paid him in the same coin; but I have first to bless the name of your mother before I bear it on my tongue, for she is the daughter of my Prophet. Then he whispered in the ear of Husain, 'If you please, walk along with me to a lonely spot; I shall just speak to you a few words.' When Husain found Hur humiliated, he himself cooled down and went with him a few yards from the place where the two armies stood face to face, sword in hand. Hur said 'May my hands be paralysed, if I held the reins of your horse with an evil intention; may my eyes be pierced through, if I cast a malicious glance on you. But I am sorry to state that I possess lands under the governor of Kufa and, if I disobey his orders, I fear they will all be confiscated. Thus, the wisest plan is that you should go along with me a short distance until the darkness of night prevails and, ere the morning dawns, you may take any route you please. I shall write to Obeidulla that, by reason of veneration to the Prophet's harem, I pitched my tents at a distance from those of Husain; but he absconded, taking advantage of my respectful conduct.'

Husain sympathised with Hur and, understanding his delicate position, agreed to his proposal and took a road which led neither to Kufa nor to Medina but proceeded towards Adib and Kadesia, turning a little from the road

which went to Kufa. Hur accompanied him all along. He next halted at a place called Hajaimun-Noman. Here Husain saw four gentlemen coming on horseback from Kufa who turned out of the way to join him. Hur tried to intervene and check them; but Husain would not permit it and called them to his presence. One of the four, the guide Thurrimah, came before him and explained, 'O Husain! the nobility of Kufa is against you to a man. As for the rest, they love you, but the threats and bribery of Ziad's son will compel them to draw their swords against you.' When asked about Qees bin Mushir, another messenger of Husain, he stated 'He was taken to the presence of Obeidulla who commanded him to curse Ali and his sons. But, contrary to the order, he praised them and cursed Ziad and his family. Like Abdulla bin Yaqthar, he was taken to the top of the building and thrown there from to the ground, with the result that he succumbed at once to the fall.'

On hearing this news, Husain was moved to tears and, in the fulness of his heart, he read the Koranic verse, 'There have been some who met *the Decree of God* (Death) and some are still in expectation of it and have not changed (their minds).' He then blessed those killed for his cause and that of God and Truth, saying, 'O Lord! let their mansions be in Paradise and gather us and them together in the fixed resting place of Thy mercy and the delights of Thy reward.'

Thurrimah then wondered to see such a small number of Husain's attendants and said, 'The preparations of Obeidulla are so enormous that the plains of Kufa are full of soldiers to an extent I never saw in my life. After a muster, they will all be despatched against you; while I find your number so small that those under Hur marching along with you quite are sufficient for the purpose.'

Husain started again and, after a long march, made his ninth halt at Zee-qum: Here again Husain collected his relations and friends and delivered a speech, saying 'The course which affairs have taken is manifest to you. The world has changed its colour; virtue has almost vanished. This is the age of Wrong and the followers of Right have passed away. A time has come when the true believer has to separate himself from the mischievous mutineer and turn towards his Creator. Life with tyrants is hard to me and I consider my death as martyrdom.'

Zobiar-ibn-ul-Qeen then stood up on behalf of his associates and spoke as follows:—

'O son of the Apostle of God! all of us heard your words. By God! even if deserting you were not a crime and even if we possessed everlasting life, we would have preferred death in obeying your orders to such a life.'

Then Hilal-bin-Nafi said, 'By God! it is not disagreeable to meet our own Creator; nor do we hate our death; we are resolute in our holy intentions; we are friends to your friends and foes to your foes.'

Burair-bin-Khuzair next got up and declared, 'By God! O grandson of the Prophet! Our Lord will certainly bless us through you, if for you we fight, if we are wounded in your service, and if we are fortunate in attaining salvation through your grandfather.'

The little band again started, guided by Thurrimah, who knew the various routes better than any in Husain's camp. Hur sometimes accompanied it and sometimes was absent. But, when the two armies reached a village in the province of Ninevah, a rider was seen approaching from the direction of Kufa. He came straight to Hur, ignoring the presence of Husain, and handed him a letter written by Obeidulla, son of Ziad. Hur tore it open and

began to read it aloud, standing between the two armies. The letter ran thus :—

‘ Arrest Husain, hold him fast and lead him to a waterless plain where there is no place of refuge. I have commanded my messenger not to part with you, until you have successfully executed my order; he will then return and inform me of all our affairs.’

Husain kept on his march until at last he reached a plain about forty miles from Kufa and three miles from the Euphrates. Here, Husain’s horse suddenly stopped and would not go a step further. Husain called for another and mounted it. Even this refused to proceed. He even had recourse to a whip which the Ahlul-Baith never use, until they are driven to it in very rare circumstances. But the horses, all stood fast and would not move an inch forward. He then tried a camel, which followed the example of the horses. A disciple was ordered to call some inhabitants of the adjoining villages. The command was forthwith executed and a number of the adjacent rural folk was observed coming respectfully to Husain’s presence. He asked them the name of the place, to which one of them responded, saying it was Gazeria. Another cried, ‘ No. No. It belongs to our province of Ninevah.’ A third cried it was ‘ Saqia ’ and some others said it was *Arduth-thuf*. But Husain kept on asking if the place had any other name; when, at last, an old gentleman of experience cried, ‘ O grandson of the Prophet! I have heard from my forefathers that this place is called “ *Karbala*.” This is the place where every Prophet that passed this side was put to grief and suffered serious hardship.’ Husain nodded his head, saying, ‘ Aye! this is the place of “ *Karb* ” “ *Bala* ” that is of “ *affliction* ” and “ *trouble* ” ’ and ordered his little band to dismount.

CHAPTER XI.

HUSAIN IN KARBALA.

HISTORIANS unanimously declare that it was on Thursday, the second of Muharram 61 A.H. and first of October 680 A.D. that Husain reached Karbala with his little band. As soon as he got down, he took a handful of earth and compared it with another handful which he had in his pocket given to him by his grandfather with the statement that a land containing such a soil would be the place of his martyrdom. He now smelt both and threw down both, saying 'This is our final destination; here will our young and old be slaughtered; here will our ladies be deprived of head coverings and apparel; here will our friends come to visit our graves; all this was predicted to me by my grandfather and his words can never be false.'

Before we relate the horrible events of the field of *Karbala*, we have to locate it geographically and state the little history we know of the place. On the map of Arabia, we find the name Karbala, or Mashad-i-Husain as some choose to call it, three miles from the western bank of the Euphrates. It lies over fifty miles from Bagdad, through which city pilgrims from India generally pass to reach Karbala and pay their respects to Husain's sepulchre. It is now a small flourishing town and promises to develop rapidly in population and commerce. But, at the time of Husain's arrival, it was a vast plain without a blade of grass, and people dreaded to settle there and some even to pass through it, fearing that some calamity would befall them. At a distance could be seen some

petty dwellings belonging to the members of the Bani Asad tribe.

Even Moses lost his way and roamed about for nearly forty years round the place which he called *the terrible wilderness*, near Kadesh Barnea, the present Kadesia. (Deuteronomy 1. 19.)

The Muhammadan traditions say that it was here that Noah's Ark was caught by a whirlpool on the tenth of the seventh month, that is, Muharram, a week before it settled on Mount Ararat. Even Jesus Christ is reported to have visited Karbala and wept for some heart-rending events which had to occur some seven hundred years afterwards.

No doubt, during the time of the Pharaohs of Egypt, this place was inhabited by some adversaries of God whom the sword of the Lord God of hosts punished and destroyed with a view to clean and reserve the field of Karbala for his holy sacrifice which had to take place by the river Euphrates. (Jeremiah 46. 9.)

Coming back to our subject, Husain had not yet selected the place for his tents, when Hur came up and ordered his soldiers to halt near the river Euphrates, so as to intercept Husain's further march. Zohair-ibnul-queen, an experienced veteran, suggested to Husain that, as Hur possessed only a thousand horsemen, it would be easy to fall on them unawares and destroy them, creating panic in the enemy's camp by a sudden onslaught, taking advantage of the enemy's weakness. But Husain refused to accept the suggestion and dreaded the idea of aggressive action for fear of being considered a tyrant in the eyes of God.

Some short-sighted people give proofs of their ignorance of Islamic History by saying that the sad events of Karbala were of merely a political nature and had no bearing on religion. This refusal of Husain to accept the

suggestion of a veteran friend of his sufficiently speaks of Husain's holy intentions and his readiness to suffer rather than make others suffer, while supporting to the very letter the religious precepts inculcated by his grandfather.

Husain and his little band dismounted and then the ladies were helped to get down. As soon as Ummi Kulsoom, [Husain's younger sister, set her foot on the ground, a yellow dust rose up and she cried, to her brother, 'I am terrified at this dreadful plain. I would prefer to have our tents pitched at some distance from this spot.'

'Destiny does not allow,' replied Husain, 'to go any further or to retrace our steps.'

After the dismounting was over, Husain sat looking at his weapons. He took up his sword and began reciting the following lines while cleaning and polishing it :—

'Alas! Thy friendship O world! day and night there
is a number whom thou murderest and who claim
from thee their blood,

Thou art not satisfied even with a substitute,
Every individual has to walk along the way I now
tread,

How near has approached the time of our departure?
God's powerful hand controls everything;

Holy is God and He hath no equal.'

Abu Makhnaf, the famous historian, records in his work on the tragedy of Karbala, the following words of Imam Zain-ul-Abidin, the eldest son of Husain, who was laid up with fever in the camp :—

'I carefully listened to my father repeatedly uttering these lines, which appealed to my heart seriously, but I controlled myself. My aunt, Zainub, who was already heart-broken at the overshadowing calamities, appeared before Husain with tears in her eyes and said, 'My dear brother! delight of my eyes! successor of our dead! and

ornament of the living! I would rather die than hear such words from your lips.' Finding her overpowered with grief, Husain advised her, saying 'Let not the devil carry away thy *patience*. Death is decreed for all; those in heaven as well as those on earth must one day suffer death; it is only God that is immortal; it is He alone that commandeth and to Him shall everything return. My father and grandfather were better than me and yet died and every Moslem has to follow their footsteps.' 'When I am killed,' continued Husain, 'do not rend your jackets; do not tear your faces and do not pluck your hair.' He then led her to her tent and soothed her for some time with his company.

Husain came out and ordered his associates to pitch their tents close to one another round those of the ladies.

He next asked some of his friends to call the young and old, males and females, of the Bani Asad tribe. When they came, he ascertained the names of the owners of the land where he had now come. He paid sixty thousand gold coins to those landlords and purchased the land, though most of the people dissuaded him from so doing, saying that it was a barren desert where nothing could grow. Husain said that he wanted to settle there and make it a town. He then addressed the men of the Bani Asad tribe and said, 'I do not wish to be benefited in any way by the land; but I make an endowment of it to you. Within a few days, I and the young and old accompanying me will be butchered here like sheep and our enemies will leave our corpses un-interred. I request you to have our bodies buried, and, if our friends come in search of our graves, please keep them as guests for three days and show them the places of our burial.' He then called the women of the tribe and advised them,

saying, 'If your menfolk do not act according to my words and leave our bodies unburied, for fear of being persecuted by the Omiade tyrants, you please see that our bodies are interred; for you are women and no one will dare harm you.' Last, he called the children of the same tribe and said, 'If your parents are led away by the threats and bribery of the Omiades and they do not bury our bodies, such things cannot influence you and hence I request you to carry earth in your jackets while playing in the plain and throw it over our bodies to cover them from exposure.'

On the third of Muharram, a regiment six thousand strong under the command of Omar bin Saad reached Karbala. This Omar was a military officer under Obeidulla, son of Ziad, who called him along with others and announced that whoever would lead an expedition against Husain and destroy him and his associates, would be rewarded with the revenue of the District of Rai for a spell of ten years. Omar was the first to rush forth and declare his readiness to undertake this most sacrilegious act, but wanted a month's time for the arrangement of his household affairs, before he could proceed to meet Husain. This being refused, he applied for ten days' time. Even this was not granted. He then went to his house and found a number of the sons of Mohajirin and Ansar waiting for him, who at once asked him, 'O Omar! would you like to fight with the grandson of the Prophet, while your father was the sixth in order to declare his acceptance of Islam.' He replied, 'Two alternatives have kept me in a confused state of mind, losing the revenue of Rai and fighting with Husain. But I prefer fighting with Husain to losing the revenue of Rai.' He then recited the following lines:—

'By God! I cannot decide which to choose,

The loss of Rai or the sin of murdering Husain, my
cousin,

The troubles of the world are overwhelming and the
government of Rai will cool my eyes ;

Certainly God will pardon me, though I should be by
this act the worst of all human and jin sinners,

Beware! this world has its present value while the
other is only a promise,

There can be no wise man who would like to forego
the thing in hand for something promised : ,

People say God has created heaven, hell, wrath and
fetters,

If these are true, I shall repent afterwards.

But, if all these are only a fiction, I shall succeed in
gaining this vast world with its innumerable
pleasures.'

Abu Makhnaf writes that, as soon as he had finished
these lines, he and those present heard an unseen reciter
reciting the following lines, counter-arguing his state-
ments :—

'Beware! O son of illegitimate birth! in vain will thy
efforts be,

Thou wilt lose even what is thine own. Soon thou
wilt be thrown into a hell whose flames will never
subside;

If thou killest Husain, knowing full well that he is
noblest of the creation, thou wilt become the target
of everybody's criticism,

O thou greatest loser among all creatures of God!
thou canst not expect to govern Rai, after Husain
is murdered by thee.'

Abu Makhnaf states that Omar bin Saad was the first to
proceed with an army six thousand strong, with a view to
murder Husain.

Next Shees bin Rabai reached Karbala with four thousand soldiers. He was followed by a train of detachments under Urva bin Qees, Sinan bin Quasi Nakhai, Haseen bin Nameer (who was posted at Khadesia, to guard the routes), Shimar Ziljohshan, Mazair bin Rahialmazini, Yezid bin Rikabi Kelbi, Nazar bin Kharsha, Muhammad bin Ashas, Abdulla bin al Haseen, Khooli Asbahi, Baker bin Kaabbin Thalha and Hajar ibnul Hur, each at the head of from one to ten thousand soldiers. Hur was also reinforced by two thousand more.

Abu Makhnaf says that the field of Karbala was full of Yezid's soldiers, numbering eighty thousand Kufians and Irakians, not to speak of the innumerable hosts from Syria and other parts.

As soon as each regiment entered the field, drums and trumpets sounded so loudly that the sound waves spread far and wide, until they were lost in the blasts of the wilderness. Each time Zainub heard the sound, she asked her brother Abbas to enquire if any of Husain's supporters had come. But he used to go out and return with a negative reply, which added to the disappointment of Zainub. She requested Husain to draft letters to his friends inviting them to help and support the cause of right. But Husain knew the results of such writings. Just to please her, he wrote some to his friends. One of these letters was to Muhammad-i-Hanafi, a son of Ali. It ran thus :—

From Husain, son of Ali, to Muhammad, son of Ali, and other Hashimites residing with him:—

‘May it be known to you that I have turned myself away from this worldly life and am expecting martyrdom. I have trained my mind to think as if this world has not existed and to believe the next world to be everlasting. I have compared the two worlds and have accepted the next in preference to the present.’

On the fourth of Muharram, Omar bin Saad wanted to despatch a messenger to Husain's camp to enquire what had brought him there. But none among the Kufians dared go in to Husain's presence ; for it was they that had invited him to Kufa and had now joined his enemies to encounter him. However, one Kaseer bin Abdulla volunteered for the errand and came near Husain's camp. He then cried in a loud voice, 'O Husain! What has brought you here? Why have you come towards us?' Husain asked his associates if any of them knew the messenger. One Abu Thammamai Saidavi replied, 'He is one of the worst inhabitants of the earth.' Husain asked his friend to enquire of the messenger what he wanted. When asked by Abu Thammamai Saidavi, the messenger expressed his desire to see Husain personally and explain his message to him. Zohair ibnul Qeen allowed him to go, on condition that he should remove his weapons and go unarmed. He refused to accept the condition and the interview prayed for was not granted. Omar bin Saad sent another person, Kurra bin Qees-i-Hanthali, to Husain. He accepted the condition of Zohair and went unarmed into the presence of Husain. Husain explained to him that, as the Kufians had invited him for their guidance, he thought it his religious duty to respond to their call. But, if they had now changed their minds and were not willing to accept him, he was ready to go back. When Khurra was asked to return to Omar's camp and explain to him Husain's ideas, he was unwilling to go, but said, I should not like to enter hell after I have once quitted it. Husain's camp is heaven and no wise man would leave it after he has once entered it.' He then explained to Husain that all those that had invited him by writing friendly letters were then in the ranks of Omar to stand by him and charge one whom they had themselves invited.

When night came on, Omar issued from his camp and called Husain for an interview. A carpet was spread between the two opposing armies and both Husain and Omar sat on it till late in the night. Husain showed him the letters written to him by the Kufians and explained to him the intentions with which he had come. The next night too Husain and Omar had a long interview at the same place. Khooli, who was fostering a particular sense of animosity against the family of the Prophet, wrote to Obeidulla, saying that Omar had been sympathising with Husain and hence he could not be expected to execute what he had undertaken to do. Obeidulla at once drafted an order, asking Omar to be extremely hard with Husain. The letter containing the above order is translated below from Abu-Makhnaf Ausami Kufi, as the wording of the letter as quoted by both is almost the same :—

‘O son of Saad! I learn that you spend whole nights out of your camp along with Husain near the bank of the Euphrates. You hold friendly discourses with him on various topics and show him every mildness. Now, as soon as this reaches you and you read it, see that no drop of water is carried to Husain’s camp, if you mind your own welfare. Post your men between the Euphrates and Husain’s soldiers. Attack and destroy them. I allow the use of water of the Euphrates by Christians and Jews, but refuse it to Husain, his relatives and friends. Guard the banks, so that they may not be able to take any water, in return for what they have done to the pious Caliph Osman who was so unjustly treated. I know that harming dead bodies does no good or evil, but, I command you to trample their dead bodies under the hoofs of horses, after you have killed them. If you are reluctant to carry out my orders, hand over the charge of

my forces to the bearer Shimar Ziljoushan and come to me to wait for my future orders.'

The letter was put in an envelope and handed over to Shimar who was ordered to leave forthwith. It was on the morning of Monday the seventh day of Muharram when Shimar came to Karbala and stood near the camp of Omar bin Saad. Full of arrogance in expectation of becoming the commander-in-chief of the forces of Ibni Ziad, he sent word to Omar to come out and receive the letter. Omar, who was no less conceited and proud, heeded not his words but called him to his presence. Shimar had to go to him and deliver up the writing of Ibni Ziad. Omar read the contents, nodded his head and said to Shimar, 'No slave would condescend to undertake the murder of an innocent soul like Husain; but, in order to frustrate your plans, I will certainly do it, unmindful of the consequences.'

Hardly had Omar bin Saad gone through his letter when he called Omar bin Hajjaj (one of the commanders of Yezid's forces) and ordered him to take five hundred horsemen to guard the bank of the Euphrates against Husain and his associates. The relatives of the Prophet and their friends were thus denied the use of the wholesome element which God created in abundance for the upkeep of life. The stone-hearted accomplices of the grandson of Abu Sufain and Hind used to drink full from the Euphrates and allowed their horses, dogs and even pigs to drink, but showed pitchers full of water to the defenders of faith and spilt it on the earth with laughter and ridicule. One Abdulla bin Haseen Al Alzadi stood near the bank of the river and called to Husain and said, 'O Husain! don't you see the crystal water, as pure and transparent as the atmosphere above? By God! you will not be able to allow a drop to pass

through your throat until you die with a parched tongue.'

Husain lifted up his head and said, 'O God! kill this man by thirst and do not forgive him his crimes.' No sooner had Husain finished his prayer, writes Kamil Ibni Aseer, a world renowned Sunni historian, than a burning thirst caught the infidel who began drinking from the river and vomiting it again to drink once more. He went on repeating the process until at last unable to bear the thirst any more he flung himself into the flowing water and drank to such an extent that made his stomach burst out and his body sank to the ground.

Even after witnessing the sordid death of their friend, the tyrannical forces did not cease ridiculing Husain; but he did not repeat his destructive prayer and bore their words patiently, after once showing what his prayer was capable of doing.

The whole of the seventh day of Muharram passed and the young and old in the camp of Husain could get no drop of water. The dry, shivering lips of children cried 'Thirst, thirst' and the feeble, pathetic word was powerful enough to move every hearer to tears, not to speak of the mothers who sat by their sides soothing them to sleep. But it was not possible for any one to wet those parched lips. The next night came on and the scarcity of the refreshing liquid reduced the inmates of Husain's camp to a worse state. The eighth morning of Muharram dawned and saw the children of Husain lying on the ground panting for want of food and water. Abbas, Husain's brother and his most faithful friend, could not bear to see the awful spectacle in the camp. He attempted to sink a well and thus quench the thirst of Husain's children. But Alas! he came across a sheet of rock while digging it and there was no hope of obtaining any water.

He dug again for water but with equally unhappy result. The night came on, but there was no chance of getting any water. Husain called his faithful brother Abbas and said 'Brother! take some of our valiant soldiers with leathern bags and make an effort to get water from the Euphrates.' 'Most willingly,' replied the obedient brother, and took some thirty horsemen and a score of the infantry with twenty leathern bags. With these he marched at the dead of night and approached the bank of the Euphrates. When the party came in contact with the enemy's forces posted to guard the river, Omar bin Hajjaj cried in fury, 'Who are you that are approaching the river?' One of the companions of Abbas returned, 'It is I, Hilal bin Nafeir, your cousin, I have been driven by extreme thirst to the river-side.' 'Relish the pure water,' cried Omar bin Hajjaj, 'may it be wholesome to you.' 'Cursed be thou,' retorted Hilal bin Nafeir, 'Thou allowest me to drink of the Euphrates, while Husain's children are about to die of thirst.' 'You are right,' replied Omar, 'I am also aware of the facts, but I have to execute the orders of our ruler.' Hilal then cried to his friends to march forward towards the river, unmindful of the obstruction. They suddenly made a rush, though Omar's forces concentrated to resist the march of Husain's supporters. A severe skirmish ensued and the valient soldiers reached the bank. Some of these moistened and filled the dry, contracted leathern bags while others defended them. With skilful use of weapons, Abbas and his fifty assistants succeeded in breaking through the overwhelming numbers of the enemy and safely reached the presence of Husain, leaving a great number of bodies behind them to roll in blood. The twenty bags were placed before Husain who distributed the water among his children, ladies and associates. But, as many authors assert, Husain, Zainub,

Abbas and Ali, son of Husain, did not drink a drop of the water, so as to reserve their share for the use of the children, when it was again needed.

When Omar bin Saad learnt of the success of Husain's friends in reaching the river and quenching their thirst in spite of the powerful blockade, he was first astonished at their bravery, but afterwards issued severe orders to guard the bank more strictly and sent thousands more for the purpose.

In the morning, Husain saw a huge number of the enemy moving towards his camp with a view to destroy its inmates. He ordered his horse and, when it was ready, he got upon it and rode towards the advancing host. He cried to them to listen carefully to what he had to say. When he found them attentive, he first praised God, blessed the Prophet and said 'O people that call yourselves Moslems! Know who I am and what lineage I have. Then consider well, whether it is allowable for you to murder me. I am the only surviving son of your Prophet's daughter. I am the son of Ali, the selected servant of God. I declare, my faith in God, His holy Prophets and all that was sent down on Muhammad, the last of them. Was not Hamza, the chief of the martyrs during the time of the Prophet, an uncle of my father? Was not Jaffer who was given wings to fly in Paradise, my father's own brother? Did not the Prophet declare about my deceased brother and myself, 'These two are the Chiefs of the youths of Paradise?' Did he not say, 'I leave behind me two weighty things, the Book of God and my children.' These things have certainly reached your ears. If you confess their truth, you are in the right. But, if you think I lie, which, God forbid, I have never done in my life, there are still alive the companions of the Prophet, Jaubir ibni Abdullahi Ansari,

Abu Saïed-i-Khudri, Sahl ibni Sahl-i-Saidi, Yezid ibni Arqam, Anas bin Malick. You can ascertain this from them.' Shimar interrupted the speech by some unjust accusation. But Habib ibni Muzahir silenced him with a rebuke. When quiet again prevailed, Husain called Shees bin Rabi, Kaseer bin Shahab and others who had signed letters of invitation sent to him and who were then present in the ranks of the enemy and said, 'Did you not invite me by writing letters? Did you not say that you would give me the ease and comfort you enjoy and would share my hardship and trouble?' They pleaded ignorance; but Husain called for those innumerable letters which he had carefully preserved, to produce them at the time of need. He began reading some of them with the names undersigned. When he got no reply to that, he said, 'Even if you deny having written those letters, and supposing they were forged, I ask you the reason why you obstruct my way and do not allow me to go wherever I like.'

Qees Ibni Ziad then cried, 'First obey the orders of Ibni Ziad and acknowledge Yezid as the Caliph; then we shall listen to your words.' Husain replied, 'You cannot expect me to surrender submissively, nor can I retreat like a slave; but I seek refuge in God from every conceited individual as does not believe in the Day of Judgment.'

Husain then asked his associates to retire to their tents and stood in the field along with his brother and son, Abbas and Ali, and invited Omar bin Saad for a conference. Omar came out accompanied by his son Hafs and one of his slaves. Husain said to him, 'O Omar! don't you fear God to whom you have to return? Are you not afraid of attacking me, when you know that I am the son of your Prophet's daughter? It is binding on you to

accompany me and obey my orders and thus please God.' Omar replied, 'If I follow your advice, Obeidulla will pull down my house and I will be rendered homeless.' 'I shall supply you,' said Husain, 'with a better dwelling than you possess now,' 'But,' replied Omar, 'he will confiscate all my property.' 'Never mind,' retorted Husain, 'I shall see that your loss is made good.' 'I am afraid,' said Omar, 'about my wife and children who are now in Kufa.'

Out of sympathy for humanity, Husain tried to save Omar bin Saad and his accomplices from committing the worst crime of murdering the innocent Imam of the Day; but, when the latter evaded the advice and expressed his determination to accomplish the heinous offence, he threatened him by the prediction 'You will not be able to eat much of the wheat growing in the Rai District, in expectation of which you intend to murder me.' 'But,' replied Omar, 'I will at least enjoy the barley of Rai, if not its wheat.'

The forces that had fallen back to allow the conference to be conducted peacefully, advanced again after it terminated. Husain then sent a message through his brother Abbas saying, 'From my youth I have had a love of worship, prayer and supplication. I just want a night so that I may bid farewell to my service and the recitation of the Koran.' Omar consulted with Shimar whether a night's time might be granted to Husain to which the latter replied, 'You are the commander; do as you please; but, if I had been in your place, I would never have granted it.' 'Strange!' cried Omar bin Hajjaj, 'we grant several months' time to the infidels of Turkey and Deilam, if they request it; but the grandson of the Prophet wants a night's time and you refuse it.' Many others supported him, and Omar bin Saad was compelled to grant

one night's time, but remarked, ' This time is granted to Husain to consider the question of his acknowledgment of Yezid's sovereignty. If, in the morning, he takes the oath of allegiance, he will be sent to Obeidulla bin Ziad ; but, if he refuses, we shall fight and slaughter him and all his companions. '

When this was settled in the evening of the ninth day of Muharram, the two armies retired to their camps. Though the Kufian and Syrian hordes had put off their mutinous rebellion against their master Husain, thirst and hunger cruelly continued their destructive work in the holy camp. We translate below the words of Sukaina, daughter of Husain, a young girl of about four, who narrated the sad events of the evening some days after the occurrence :—

' On the ninth of Muharram, the scarcity of water had come to such a point that we were about to lose our lives. All vessels and reservoirs were empty. The leathern bags had become dry and contracted. About the close of the day, we could hardly bear the thirst. I intended to go to my aunt Zainub and explain to her my distress, expecting her to have reserved some water for us, children. I entered her camp and found her inside, with my youngest brother Ali Asghar, a child of about six months, in her arms. She alternately stood up and sat down so as to sooth the child that was struggling like a young fish just out of water and was crying with intense agony. She was uttering these words, ' O Ali Asghar ! wait and stop weeping. ' She then said, ' Poor child ! how canst thou bear severe calamity that has befallen thee ? It is very very hard for thy aunt to hear thee weeping and to see thee struggling for want of water and not to be able to help thee and quench thy thirst. ' I was moved to tears, when I observed the pitiable scene. My aunt then asked if it was I, Sukaina, that was weeping. I replied in the

affirmative, but could not explain my own thirst, for fear of adding to the mental worries of my aunt who was already afflicted by seeing the child in a precarious condition. I suggested to her to inquire if any of the ladies of our father's friends could spare any water for the child. She accordingly started with Ali Asghar in her arms and reached the tents of my other aunts. Sadly disappointed here, she left for the tent where Husain's sons and their relations were staying, with the young boys and girls accompanying her. Even here no water was available. She sent a person to the tents of my father's friends with an equally unsatisfactory result. In despair, she returned to her own tent followed by a crowd of children, numbering over twenty, who had grouped round her in expectation of getting some water. A friend of my father, named Burair-i-Hamadani, entitled the principal reciter of the Koran, happened to pass the tent in which these children had assembled and had been crying impatiently for water. The woeful cry of 'Thirst' caught the ear of Burair and moved him so much that he at once fell down on the ground with intense grief and threw handfuls of dust on his head and cried to other friends of my father, saying, 'O brethern! would you like to see the grandchildren of Fatima, the holy Prophet's only daughter, die of thirst, while we still possess swords in our hands? By God! it can never so happen. Nor can there be any pleasure in life after these are dead. We shall certainly make a name, if we lose our lives before death overtakes the children of our master. I think it advisable that each one of us should hold a child by the hand, approach the banks by the Ghazeria route and quench their thirst before it destroys the children.'

'But Yahya-i-Mazni, another friend of my father, said, 'The guards watching the river banks will not allow us,

but will certainly fight with us. If we take the children with us and, if an arrow or lance strikes any of them, we would be accountable for such a murder. Hence, I think it advisable that no children should accompany us and we should go with a leathern bag and bring it full of the river water. If our adversaries fight with us, we will fight with them in return. If any of us falls in the fight, he will be considered as a sacrifice for the children of Fatima. Burair accepted the suggestion and, after some consultation, he took a leathern bag and advanced towards the river accompanied by three of the gentlemen in Husain's camp. As soon as the guards of the river heard the sound of the footsteps of Husain's men, they cried, 'Who are those that are approaching the bank?' Burair replied 'It is I, Burair, a member of the Hamadan tribe. I have been driven by extreme thirst to the riverside.' 'Advance no more,' said one from the adversary's ranks, 'wait where you are, until we get orders from our commander.' Ishaq who was at the head of those guarding the Ghazeria route of the river, happened to be a relation of Burair. When he heard of Burair's name, he at once ordered the soldiers to clear the way for him and his associates. In a short time, the four friends of Husain stepped into the flowing water and, as they felt the cool, refreshing element flowing past their feet, they contemptuously remarked, 'Cursed be the son of Saad! How invigorating is the cool water flowing at our feet! But he does not allow the relations of the Prophet to wet their dry throats with a few drops.' Burair adjured them, saying, 'O Brothers! let not this precious time be wasted in mere talking; remember those children whom we have left weeping; fill the leathern bag and try to return soon; for the hearts of Husain's children have been melting away for want of water. Let none of us taste the water until

Husain's children are satisfied with it. His loyal associates said, 'Never shall we allow a drop to pass our lips until the thirst of Husain's children is quenched.' One of the guards of Yezid heard this talk between Burair and his associates and said, 'Getting into the river and drinking its water have not satisfied you and you now become so audacious as to carry water for Husain. By God! I shall inform Ishaq of your intentions and, if he does not take notice of this, owing to your relationship with him, I shall certainly fight with you and, when a battle ensues, Omar bin Saad will somehow or other come to know of the causes underlying our quarrel. Burair requested him to keep the matter confidential and went close to him, with a view to prevent him from going to the tent of Ishaq. But he made his escape and reported the matter to his commander. Ishaq at once ordered his soldiers to bring Burair and his companions to his presence and, if they refused, to fight and stop them from reaching Husain's camp. A huge number ran and shouted to Burair, 'You are not permitted by Ishaq to carry any water to Husain's camp.' Burair asked them what they intended doing, if he carried the water. They replied that they would certainly shed his blood there, if he attempted to do so. Burair said 'It is easier for us to have our blood shed at the bank than to throw away the water contained in the leathern bag. Cursed be you! None of us has even tasted the water of the Euphrates. We simply desire that the burning livers of Husain's children may be cooled by this water and then the family of the grandson of the Prophet may quench its thirst. By God! we will not allow you to touch this bag until our blood is shed round it.' One of the enemy cried, 'Strange! these are prepared to give their lives for this small quantity of water which can in no way satisfy them.'

Another said 'Whatever it may be, we cannot see the orders of our officer violated. Surround those brave soldiers and do not allow them to take water.' When Burair heard this, he began shedding tears and said, 'Alas! the fate of the children of Fatima. O Lord! let thy blessings cease for those that deny water to the family of the Prophet.' One of the four lifted up the leathern bag on his shoulder. The inhuman brutes surrounded him and his associates. A shower of arrows was shot from a distance, most of which missed their aim. One passed through the strap which bound the neck of the bag and pierced the shoulder of its carrier. A stream of blood ran down his body and stained his garment. Heedless of the loss of blood, he praised the Lord and said, 'Thanks to the Almighty who has made my neck a shield for the leathern bag.'

When Burair saw himself and his associates in great danger, he shouted aloud, 'O assistants of the sons of Abu Sufian! May God curse you! Why do you awaken sleeping mischief? Let not the bloodthirsty swords of my tribe Hamadan be unsheathed.' When Burair uttered these words in a loud voice Husain was seated outside his tent in the company of his friends. One of these recognised the voice of Burair and said, 'It seems that Burair is advising the Kufians.' 'No,' replied Husain, 'he is in need of your help; run out at once to save him.' When a number of Husain's horsemen were observed running to Burair's assistance, Yezid's soldiers fell back on all sides, with a view to prevent a battle on a larger scale.

Burair came back safe and marched straight to the place where the distressed children had assembled. He brought down from his shoulder the leathern bag and cried, 'O relations of the Prophet! take this water and

drink it. May it be wholesome to you. May it be so destined that it passes down your throats.' The children in extreme glee threw themselves on the leathern bag; some rubbed their cheeks on it, some pressed it to their bosom and said, 'Hurrah! Burair has, after all, brought some water for us.' The rush of the children upset the bag and alas! the water contained in it suddenly made its way to the ground and was quickly absorbed by the dry earth. The children began to cry bitterly and said, 'Alas! the water that Burair brought for us, has been lost.' When Burair saw this, he began beating his face and said, 'At the risk of my life I brought this water. But, it was not the fate of these to quench their thirst.'

As the day was drawing to a close, the devilish multitude pushed forward little by little, until, at last, they laid a close siege to the encampment of Husain. Fearing that the surrounding hosts would not keep their word and would launch an attack against the devoted few under the siege, Husain ordered a trench to be dug round his encampment, leaving only a certain space for men to pass, and into it was put such burning fuel as was available at the time. One Jawaira, a horseman in the enemy's ranks, came trotting his horse towards Husain's camp, and when he found flames all round the tents, he remarked contemptuously, 'O Associates of Husain! this fire is only to remind you of the fire of Hell that waits for you.' (Cursed be he and his accomplices.) Husain at once replied, 'You mention my connection with fire while I am just expecting to return to the Merciful One from Whom I emanated.' He then lifted up his hands and said, 'O Lord! make him taste the fire of this world in addition to the one that awaits him in the next.' No sooner had Husain completed his prayer, than the horse of Jawaira got suddenly startled and threw its rider. But his foot

was caught in the stirrup and the horse dragged him straight to the trench dug by Husain's men, in which logs of wood were ablaze. The man fell down into it and was soon reduced to ashes.

Then came on the night which can never be forgotten for its frightful scenes unparalleled in History. All round were petrolling the brutal accomplices of Hind's grandson, ready to kill the thirsty offspring of one whom they even that day had recognised or pretended to recognise as the Apostle of God. They were sharpening their swords to accomplish the murder of one whom their inward soul believed to be all that can be divine in a man. In the middle, were the few tents of the devoted followers of Husain, with a timorous retinue of ladies and children. The young folk tormented by thirst were lying almost unconscious with their mothers by their side, who at times felt their pulses or observed their breathing, to ascertain how far there was life in them. The voices of the patrolling infidels round and the heavy sounds of drums set the nerves of the ladies on edge. The cry of challenge from the enemy's ranks at times created an additional shudder and drew out their tears.

Husain went to the tents of his soldiers and found them restless. He thought it his duty to reveal facts to them once again. He did not wish to have any unwilling associates in the troubles and calamities that awaited him alone. He wished to impress on them the fact that all that the Omaides wanted was his head and that they would be quiet satisfied, if they succeeded in getting it by his murder. Hence he called on all those that professed loyalty to him and counted themselves as his friends to assemble in his own tent so that he might explain to them the chances of their escape from the siege. Thus he wanted to test the sincerity of his devotees and differentiate

between those that had accepted Islam for wordly ends and those that were true servants of the Lord and were prepared to sacrifice their lives for His representative on earth. When they had all gathered together, he began his sermon. First he said that prosperity or adversity could not prevent him from praising the Lord. He then went on to say, 'I praise Thee, O Lord! for Thou hast acquainted me with the principles of religion and hast granted me listening ears, deep, penetrating eyes and a knowing heart. I thank Thee for making me one of Thy loyal and grateful servants. I express my gratitude for Thy appointment of me as guide of humanity towards Thee and for the enlightenment thou hast bestowed on me, in understanding the secrets and deep ideas contained in the 'Word of God.'

Now, O people! I withdraw my hold upon you, I lighten your shoulders from the burden of your pledged attachment to me and I freely allow you to desert me. If you are afraid or ashamed of being blamed, I assure you that the darkness of night will sufficiently protect you from being recognised. I advise you in this way; because the enemy is desirous of my blood alone and will not question any one else, provided he is sure of his hold on me.'

'When Husain had said this,' says his young daughter Sukaina, who was looking through an aperture in the tent, 'I saw a large number of my father's companions leaving him by tens scores. I suddenly shrieked impatiently and began weeping bitterly. My aunt Zainub at once lifted me up and soothed my mind with her pacifying words.'

But the relations and sincere friends of Husain were far differently affected by the sermon and address. They were thrilled with an emotional feeling of sincerity and a burning desire to die for his cause, which was in fact the

cause of right and virtue. They stood like statues of faithfulness and religious zeal and did not move a hair's breadth from where they were. The number of such staunch supporters of Husain was only two and seventy comprising, among others, mere children and men of eighty and over, enfeebled by age. They all expressed their enthusiasm by crying in one voice, 'Never may God show us the day that we survive you.'

Then stood up Muslim bin Ausaja, an associate of the Prophet, who was also respected by Ali for age and sincerity of faith. Husain used to call him 'uncle,' in consideration of the respect he commanded at the time of the Prophet and Ali. Though enfeebled by age and weakened by over eighty Arabian summers, he thought himself fortunate to share the enviable death of Husain. After hearing Husain's address and noticing the disloyalty of his companions, he gave expression to his enthusiasm in the following words :—

'O son of the Apostle of God! Would you like to see me desert you and not assist you at such a time. What excuses can I plead before God to prove that I have discharged my duty to you? By God! it can never so happen. Firm and resolute will I remain in whatever state I may be. I will make the chests of your enemies the objective of my spear and their bodies sheaths for my sword. Even if I am enfeebled by exhaustion, I shall use stones to defend you and your kith and kin; and, by God! never shall I leave you at this critical juncture, lest I should be blamed by God. Let it be known to the All-Knowing Lord that we did our best to defend the son of His Apostle and thus discharged our duties as best we could. I grant that we will be killed and our bodies burnt to ashes which will be blown away by the wind. Even such a torment we shall patiently bear and would

not condescend to desert you until we are destroyed in your presence; for this destruction we have to suffer only once: but in return we shall gain everlasting greatness and glory.'

Then stood up Zohair-ibnul-Queen and said, 'If it were possible for our enemies to kill me a thousand times, I would have gladly suffered death, provided yourself and your family are saved from the coming troubles.'

Then Abbas, son of Ali, in a sentence, expressed his loving and respectful heart and said, 'Damned be life after you are killed.'

Husain tenderly looked towards these and said, 'In fact, I am proud of these friends of mine. None by this time could ever get such a number of true and sincere friends as I have.'

Now we shall see how far the statement of Husain is correct. Among worldly people, real affection and sincerity can never be expected, as none of them can ever be free of selfish ideas, which, in fact, undermine their love and sincerity. But real affection demands self abnegation and selflessness. Let us cast a glance on the associates of godly people in whom the teachings of their divine teachers can be expected to inspire real love and sincerity. The Israelites of Egypt, emancipated by Moses, fail to put forward one who can give proofs of his unblemished loyalty to his emancipator. The number of faithful devotees claimed by Jesus Christ seems to be most prominent among godly people. No less than a dozen disciples left their homes and severed all their worldly connections to roam about with Jesus and teach to the world the mission of love. But it is adversity and pain that have to decide real friendship and love. Applying the sane proverb 'A friend in need is a friend in deed,' we have to reckon how many of Jesus' disciples stood the

test. Simon who had promised to let his blood fall for Jesus and to go with him into prison or death was observed to forsake him and flee when the tyrannical multitude came to arrest 'the Spirit and Word of God.'

He, as was predicted by his master, denied thrice before the cock crowed to have known or accompanied Jesus. Worst of all, Judas Iscariot betrayed his Lord for a pittance by kissing him when Pilate's men came in search of him. Such were the disciples of one who came for the first time to infuse love into the human mind. .

Muhammad's friends were no better. A pretty good number seems to have followed him in most of the battles, where success was sure and booty certain. But the battle of Ohad sufficiently tested the sincerity of his associates. When the battle turned against him, the so called friends deserted him with the exception of seven among whose names Ali appears most prominent. The deserters ran like wild goats, even though the Prophet and Ali were crying to them, 'How dare you turn tail and flee in spite of the repeated calls of the Apostle of God?' But the deserters did not even look behind and see who called them.

Really it is not easy to gain even a single friend, so sincere and so faithful as to sacrifice his own life and all he possesses for another. But Husain can rightly claim to have possessed two and seventy of such holy symbols of love and sincerity at the worst hour the human mind can conceive of. Parched by thirst, enfeebled by hunger, blinded by the smoke of the trench, assured of death, they betrayed not the slightest infirmity or weakness of faith. The promises of Ibin-i-Saad to grant high posts and lavish presents were nothing more than a puff of wind to them. They defended themselves to the last like men and fell down to roll in their blood like men and their holy souls

threw off their overcoats of bone and flesh, to fly direct to the throne of their Lord and enjoy eternal blessings there.

Now, coming back to our subject, every minute of the last night of the life of Husain and his seventy-two companions was considered very precious by them. As the time of their returning to the Creator was approaching fast, their restlessness in expectation of the particular hour developed with incalculable speed. Instead of the worldly bread and water that were denied to them, they nourished their souls with tears and repentance and their devoted prayers and supplication guided them to the fountain of life. They were waiting for their decreed time to plunge into the fountain to be drowned in it and be metamorphosed into eternal life.

‘Husain and his companions,’ writes Abu Ishaq-i-Asfraini, a Sunni author of very early date, ‘spent this night in continued service to the Lord. The atmosphere round was pregnant with voices of Allah-O-Akbar (God is Most Great), La Ilaha Illallah (There is no God but Allah), Subhanallah (Holy is Allah) and the encampment could well be compared with the bee-hive and the humming round it. Some were standing erect in worship, some kneeling and others lying prostrate, to adore Him and repeat His Holy Name. (Zia-ul-ainain. p. 84.)

‘The whole night,’ writes Tibri, another Sunni writer of great fame, ‘Husain and his friends were devotedly engaged in worship and prayers.’ (Salahun Nashathian, p. 36.)

Abu Makhnaf says ‘The night following the ninth day of Muharram, Husain and his friends were busy in prayers and supplication so much so that the encampment appeared to be a huge buzzing bee-hive (with humming all round.)

This night Husain had several duties to perform. He

had to pacify the afflicted ladies and children and had to advise them as to their behaviour in the worse distress that had still to follow; he had to give his last religious lessons to and sympathise with his friends who were so readily suffering for his cause; he had to leave his last words to his successor, Imam Zain-ul-Abidin, who was decreed to be spared and thus represent the Image of God, without which the universe would come to nothing; he had to prepare for the defence that had to ensue the following morning, because *exposing oneself to unnecessary ruin and destruction is a crime in Islam* and amounts to encouraging tyranny and oppression; above all, he had to strengthen his bond with the Almighty and imbibe strength and power to endure the worst calamities and to stand the severest test. In fact, the presence of mind displayed by Husain is far greater than that of an ordinary human being and every reasonable reader must think of him as supernatural and as one created by God to suffer, set lessons of devotion to the Almighty in the worst adversities and thus be the source of Salvation to the World.

The zeal displayed by Husain's friends to defend him and the religion brought by his grandfather seems to be unexcelled in History. Their restless expectation of the enviable death, compelled them every now and then to unsheath their swords and kiss the handles, saying, 'Let the morning dawn and we shall show how to defend the son of the Apostle of God to the last.' Though tormented by continued thirst and starvation, their faces grew brighter every hour and exhibited unbounded joy and satisfaction. Burair, to whose faithfulness we have already referred, was supposed to be a model of morality and sober habits. He was never before this night even once observed to laugh immoderately or utter a word of

humour. He was always absorbed in meditating on God and His Creation. Even such a man was seen this night amusing himself with jesting and laughing. When questioned about his unusual behaviour, he replied that his love for the approaching death in company of Husain was uncontrollable and had made him forget his sobriety.'

The ladies accompanying Husain were no less enthusiastic. They spent the terrible night in encouraging and preparing the minds of their male relations for a firm and resolute defence of the grandson of the Prophet.

Zainub, Husain's sister, combed the locks of her dear sons, Aun and Muhammad, eight and nine years old, respectively, and dressed them with the prettiest garments and head-dresses she had brought. She then seated both in her lap and advised them, saying, 'Mind not your ages but think of your connections. Your paternal grandfather, Jaffer, was so brave that, as long as he was alive, none but he could carry the Prophet's banner and he held it so fast that it could not be captured by the enemy. Only once it fell to the ground, when both his hands were severed from his body and he could no longer hold it. Your maternal grandfather Ali has established a name unsurpassed by any. Victory was certain, in whichever battle he was asked to appear. Be it known to you that, just as the field of Mina, near Mecca, is reddened with the blood of animals sacrificed at the Haj Pilgrimage, so will the opposite plains be rendered crimson tomorrow by the blood of the Prophet's family and its supporters. Would you allow me on the Day of Judgment to present an honourable face before my mother Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet? This can only be done by your interception between your uncle and his enemies and sacrificing your lives for his. Should you do so, I shall excuse you your dues of my milk with which I nourished you in your

infancy. I shall honour your blood by colouring my face with it and I shall glorify your bodies by laying them on the carpet of the Prophet.' The sons, with due regard to the advice of their mother, promised implicit obedience and affirmed their readiness to suffer for the cause of justice and righteousness.

Hasan's widow was also engaged in a similar talk with her son Khasim, a boy of fourteen. Muslim's two elder sons, who were left to the charge of Husain, were explaining to their mother their readiness to suffer death for Husain. Waheb, his mother and his wife, a Christian family that had, a few days before the night, accepted Islam in the presence of Husain, were eagerly awaiting the morning to share the misfortunes of Husain and thus prove their right to the eternal blessings promised to Husain and his companions. Abbas, who was patrolling round the encampment to watch the enemy's movements, happened to pass a tent from which a sad, feeble voice issued and melted his heart. He entered the tent and found his sister Ummi Kulsoom, Fatima's younger daughter, lying prostrate and complaining to God in the following words:—

'O Lord! Lucky is my elder sister Zainub to possess two sons to be sacrificed for our brother Husain. Hasan's wife, Muslim's wife and Waheb's mother will all partake in defending the Imam of the day by sending their sons to the field. I am the only unfortunate lady to possess no child whom I can offer as sacrifice for my brother and thus command respect in the presence of my mother Fatima on the Day of Reckoning.' When Abbas heard the woeful complaint of his sister, widow and childless, he was moved to tears and fell down to kiss her feet. He then said, 'Sister! don't be grieved at having none to send to die on behalf of Husain. I am your younger brother

and am like your son. I promise to sacrifice my life as your representative.'

Thus terminated the horrible night with the flower of God's creation exposed to the worst atrocities. The surrounded few somehow spent their night, the men engaged in prayers and supplication and restlessly waiting for the morning to sacrifice their lives for the cause of right and virtue; the ladies shuddering at the calamities that were waiting still for them and the children tossing on the ground and impatiently crying for bread and water. The devilish hordes spent their time in drinking, singing and injuring the feelings of the son of God's Apostle and his associates by unjust insults and undue indignity. The few besieged represented the small ratio of really God-fearing people in every age while the innumerable besiegers represented the huge number of Satanic forces attempting in every age to misguide the world. Husain and his seventy-two friends represented the real Islam inculcated by Ali and his sons, who are by some ill-natured critics accused of not extending Islamic territory and thus developing the number of Moslems; while the myriads sent by Yezid represented the un-Islamic Islam spread by Ali's adversaries whose chief aim was to destroy the real Islam by ruining its greatest advocates, the children of the Prophet.

The *Field of Karbala* clearly lays before all thoughtful observers that Ali and his sons cared more for quality, and could produce such souls numbering two and seventy as would sacrifice themselves and all their own for God, out of sincere devotion and in expectation of Eternal Blessings, while their adversaries nourished ideas of extending territory and increasing the number of the so called Moslems for their own fame and grandeur and undermined the real Islam, though still standing under its banner.

CHAPTER XII

AUSHOORA (THE TENTH DAY OF MUHARRAM.)

THE long hours of the terrible night came to an end at last and the twilight of the morrow began to spread over the world. Thus dawned the morning of *the Tenth Day of Seventh Month*, a day highly honoured in every *true religion*. The Hindus respect and celebrate it as the day on which the Pandavas got their liberty, and consequently untied their weapons from the Jimmi plant and prepared for regaining their lost empire from the Kauravas. On this day, Hanuman came to know the whereabouts of Sita and informed Rama. Even now, all the Hindus of India consider this day very sacred and call it Dasarà, the tenth day of their seventh month. The Christians and Jews call it *the Day of Atonement* or *the Day of Sacrifice*. The commandment revealed to Moses (Leviticus Ch. 16, V. 29 ; and Ch. 23, V. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32) enjoins the following Statute :—

‘On the tenth day of this seventh month, there shall be the Day of Atonement ; it shall be an holy convocation unto you and ye shall afflict your souls and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

And ye shall do no work in that same day ; for it is the Day of Atonement for you before the Lord, your God.

For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people ;

And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people ;

Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

It shall be unto you a Sabbath of rest and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month, at even from even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.'

Abib, the first month of the Jews, corresponds to Rajab of the Moslems; and Naisan, the seventh month of the former, to Muharram of the latter. But, during the time of Moses (Exodus Ch. 12, V. 2), the seventh month of the civil year was changed into the first month of the sacred year, and hence Muharram that was originally the seventh month is now considered the first month. Just as the religious year of the Jews begins from Abib, the Moslems begin their sacred year from Rajab.

Christian and Jewish theologians have not been able up to this time to assign any reason for the order that every person should afflict his soul from the evening of the tenth day of the same month. The annotators on the Old Testament have also been silent on the point. Thus, it can safely and beyond doubt be asserted that the cause underlying the order that every human being following the divine religions should afflict his or her soul on *the particular day* must be the heart-rending events of the field of Karbala. On the evening of the ninth of Muharram, Husain was besieged by the devilish folks and hence, for the divine decree of Husain's hardships and sufferings unparalleled in the World's History, the whole of humanity before and after the incident should begin afflicting their souls from the evening of the ninth day of Muharram; and, as Husain was sacrificed on the evening of the tenth day of the same month, the period of the affliction should continue as long as worldly pains could trouble him. The Jewish months as well as those of the Hindus and Moslems have always been lunar. The difference of the

dates calculated by Jews and Hindus from those of Moslems is due to the fact that the Jews give the month of Naisan 40 days and the Hindus give every third year an additional month, so as to make their years keep pace with solar years ; otherwise, the day of Atonement, Dasara and Muharram, all being the tenth day of the seventh month, would fall on the same day.

Now, when Husain found that it was time to offer his morning prayers, he asked his second son Ali Akbar to shout out the usual call prior to service. The son having responded, the father began gazing at him with tears in his eyes, calling to mind the misfortunes that awaited the boy. Then, all the male members in Husain's camp performed their ablution with dust instead of with water, stood behind their Imam and offered the first prayer of the last day of their life, while the ladies were also engaged in service within their tents.

Imam Zain-ul-Abidin, the sickly son of Husain, says 'My father performed his prayers in the dusk of the tenth morning, followed by his associates, and, when he finished it, he lifted up his hands and said 'O Lord ! I rely on Thee in all my sufferings and Thou art my hope in all my trials and misfortunes ; *worldly troubles are such that they carry away one's patience and control over one's self* ; if Thou dost not help me, they give opportunity to the enemies to laugh and ridicule. Thou art my refuge and place of safety ; I complain to Thee and none but Thee of my adverse circumstances. Thou wilt grant me patience to endure troubles that await me and wilt keep me firm and resolute to suffer ungrudgingly the coming hardships. Thou art the *Controller of all Destinies* and it is in Thy power to make one attain one's object or lose it.'

When the Sun reached half way to the meridian, both parties prepared for battle. Omar bin Saad gave the

standard of his forces to his slave Duraid. The right wing was given in charge of Omar bin Hajjaj and the left in charge of Urva bin Qees. Shees bin Rabai was ordered to command the infantry and Khooli the cavalry.

The small number of Husain's friends did not dishearten him and his high, organizing powers remained as fresh and active as ever. He granted his banner to his younger brother Abbas and appointed Zohair ibnul Qeen as commander of the right wing and Habeeb ibnul Muzahir as that of the left.

After these arrangements were completed, Burair took permission of Husain and came just in front of the enemy. He addressed the Kufians in particular and said 'O Kufians! Fear the Lord and remember the last words of the Prophet that warned you about your behaviour in the two weighty things, viz., The Koran and the Ablul-Baith. One of the two, the Ahlul-Baith of the Prophet, is in front of you comprising boys, girls and grown up ladies along with Husain. Let us know your intentions about them and how you mean handling these. Would you not like to see them return safe to the place whence they came? For it is you that sent written invitations to them with sworn assurances and pledges. You promised to obey and help them to the last. Now have you forgotten all your pledges? Do you wish to hand over the Prophet's Ahlul-Baith to Ibni-Ziad? You have obstructed Husain's way to the waters of the Euphrates. Really you are the worst followers of your Prophet that you treat his kith and kin in such a manner. May God keep you thirsty on the last day and reckon you as the worst of people.'

The Kufians evaded Burair's words and the only reply he got was a volley of darts with the words, 'We do not understand what this man says.' Burair retraced his steps and stood near his Imam, saying, 'I thank God for besto-

wing on me a better mind than these have.' 'But Husain, unmindful of the shower of arrows, went further riding on his horse Murthajiz, generally known as Zooljanah, and addressed the cowardly hosts, saying, 'For God's sake, let me know whether you are aware who I am.' 'How can we be ignorant of you,' all cried in one voice, 'while you are the grandson of our Prophet.' 'Is not my mother Fatima' he asked again, 'the daughter of the Prophet and my father Ali son of Abu Talib?' 'Yes' was the unanimous reply of the multitude. 'For God's sake, tell me,' he said, 'whether my grandmother Khadija was not the first lady on earth to accept Islam?' When even this nobody denied, he again asked, 'Was not Hamza, the principal martyr of the time of the Prophet, an uncle of my father and Jaffer, who, according to the Prophet's tradition, had been granted emerald wings to fly about in Paradise in compensation of his arms lost in a crusade, my own uncle?' 'Yes' cried all. He then showed the sword that was hanging at his waist and the turban he had on his head and said, 'Do you recognise these that once belonged the Prophet?' 'Yes,' they cried, 'these once formed the property of the Prophet and now you possess them as an inheritance.' He then asked, 'Do you admit that my father was the first man to accept Islam, the first and foremost as regards learning and power to forbear and, according to the Prophet's statement, the Controller and Master of the Islamic Word after him? Will he not quench, out of the cistern of Kousar, the thirst of all faithful moslems on the Day of Reckoning and will he not hold the same day the dignified banner of the Prophet? The crowd admitted the truth of all Husain's words. He then said, 'When you know who I am and what lineage I have, why do you permit my murder?' They replied, 'In spite of our knowledge of

you, we will not leave you until you taste the cup of death at our hands.' (Makthal-i-Abu Ishaq, p. 35.)

Husain then returned to the tent of his ladies and was engaged for some time in admonishing them. When he again came out, Zohair ibnul Qeen took permission of him, went before the enemy and adjured them in the following words:—

'O people! A Moslem has a right to advise another Moslem. You and we claim to follow the same religion. God desires to test both you and us as regards the Ahlul-Baith of His Holy Prophet and to see in what way you and we treat them. I invite you to assist the Ahlul-Baith and to discard the transgressor.'

Shimar sent an arrow towards Zohair and said, 'How long will you be wasting your lungs in unnecessary talk?' Zohair evaded the arrow and replied, 'You are no more than a senseless brute. Hell will be your final destination and you shall remain there for ever.' 'I shall shortly kill,' said Shimar, 'yourself and your master.' 'Life with people like you' retorted Zohair, 'is indeed a disgrace and death; while supporting the cause of Husain is certainly an incomparable blessing.' Then Zohair turned towards his own friends and said, 'Let not the words of the cursed cur deceive you. He is one to whom the salvation of the Prophet will be denied, as he intends slaughtering the Prophet's progeny. He and his accomplices will be thrown into the Eternal fire.'

At this stage, Husain sent word to Zohair commending him on the excellent way he had advised the tyrants and commanding him to return. When Zohair came back, Husain personally appeared before the enemy and said, 'Know ye men! This world is the seat of constant changes and ruin. It takes its inhabitants from one condition to another. Ye claim to profess Islam and read the holy

Koran. Ye say ye believe Muhammad to be the Prophet of God. In spite of all this, ye think it allowable to treat Muhammad's grandson with high-handedness and oppression. Ye witness the water of the Euphrates creeping like a serpent. Jews and Christians drink of it. Dogs and even hogs relish it. But the children of the Prophet are about to lose their lives for want of it.'

The tyrannical forces cried, 'Not a drop will be granted to you and you will have to suffer death one after another with parched tongues.' On hearing this impertinent reply, Husain read the Koranic verse 'Satan has predominated over these and has made them forget the Lord. These are Satanic forces and verily they will be losers.'

He then repeated a few lines condemning the behaviour of the Kufians and then, with a forcible call, invited the attention of Yezid's forces. When he found all of them once again attentive towards him, he began another address, saying, 'O people! Fear the Lord and do not murder me. I praise God who hath made this world the seat of decline and destruction. He takes its inhabitants from one shape and condition into another. Misled and wrongly guided is he who becomes a lover of such a world and unfortunate is he who becomes mad after it. O people! Do not be deceived by the misleading charms of this world, for it disappoints all those who hope well of it. The real loser is he who expects profit out of it. Now I see that the intention with which you have gathered here is unholy and will incur God's displeasure. He will turn His face away from you, if you accomplish your irreligious intention. He will withhold His blessings from you and will send down His wrath on you. Just see how good your Creator is and how wicked you are. You claim to accept God's message and His laws and profess to believe in Muhammad as His Prophet; and still you

desire to rebel against his Ahlul-Baith and to kill every individual of them. Thus Satan has assisted you and has kept you from remembering God. 'We are for God and to Him will we return (a Koranic quotation). You form a nation that has deserted Islam after once accepting it; and hence it is advisable to keep at a distance from you.'

When Omar bin Saad heard the impressive and eloquent address of Husain, he stood spellbound and feared that all his efforts would be in vain if Husain continued his stirring speech. He interrupted Husain by crying to his own people and said, 'Do not attempt to reply to Husain, for he is the son of an orator like Ali and will continue for days, arguing his cause beautifully and replying to every question that is put to him. Then Shimar came forward and, with a view to test Husain's command over language, said, 'Let me hear your instructions, I shall see how far they influence me.' Husain replied, 'I only say this. Fear God and do not murder me, for you are not authorised to kill me. I am the son of the daughter of your Prophet. My grandmother Khadija was the partner of the Prophet and possibly the words of the Prophet might have reached your ears, viz., "Hasan and Husain are the Chiefs of all those young men that will enter Paradise."'

Failing to reply to Husain's argument, Shimar returned to his position, but Omar bin Saad cried to his soldiers, 'Do not give Husain any more chances to speak. Surround and attack him from all sides.' Upon this the Kufians and Syrians drew closer round Husain, but the valiant son of the Lion of God, heedless of the overwhelming odds, asked them if he had killed any of them in retaliation for which they intended to murder him, if he had wrought any change in religion or if he had committed any such crime as is punishable by death according to

law.' 'No,' replied all unanimously, 'you are above such things.'

Husain continued, 'I wonder what keeps you from listening to and obeying my orders, while it is my sincere desire to save you from the divine wrath and to guide you to perpetual prosperity. But whoever will sin against me, verily he will be ruined and he alone shall be responsible for his own destruction. You are committing a serious blunder by not obeying my orders. Your sin and disobedience are due to the facts that your stomachs are full of forbidden food and that ignorance has sealed your hearts. Hence you are deaf to my words.'

Omar bin Saad again tried to dissuade his soldiers from listening to Husain's address; but the melody and sweetness of the speech compelled the soldiers of Yezid to induce one another to concentrate their attention on Husain. When Husain found the enemy, numbering several thousands, again willing to listen to him, he resumed his advice in the following words:—

'Disgrace to you, O those that have assembled here! Misled and baffled by ignorance, you showed your readiness to have us among you for your own guidance. We accepted your invitation at the risk of exposing our faces to unsheathed swords. When swords were drawn against us, you fanned the flames of mischief and became ready to fight and destroy your friends, through the trickery of your enemies. You have cast aside your sense of justice and discretion. Even then you have not gained your objects. You aimed to attain a high mode of life, but were satisfied by accepting the forbidden part of it. You have not experienced any evil from us nor any negligence on our part in discharging our duties to you. When it is so, what can prevent the divine wrath from reaching you? You have assembled to oppose us, while

our swords are still sheathed and our minds free of any malicious ideas. You make haste to give proof of your ill-will and gather to light the fire of animosity into which you run to throw yourselves and by the flames of which you will burn your wings like insects. It is evident that you are the worst type of men. You are misguided disciples. You discard the word of God and follow Satan. You make innovations in the Commandments of the Almighty and efface the laws of the Prophet. You murder the Prophet's progeny and shed the blood of the offspring of his vicegerent. You admit illegitimate children in your families and count them as brothers. You persecute the pious followers of religion and refrain from helping us. By God! disloyalty and promise-breaking have become special features of your character. These evil qualities have become your heredity and run along with your blood in your veins and arteries and have predominated in your hearts. You have sunk so low that heretics and heathens will ridicule you. Cursed are the promise-breakers and those that act against their own sworn pledges. God carefully watches the actions of such people. His orders against these will certainly be executed. This illegitimate son of an illegitimately born father considers that, through his threats, I will condescend to put on the garb of disgrace or will be compelled to fight. I will never dishonour myself by accepting his proposals. Nor will God, His Prophet, his daughter and my cousins approve of such a disgraceful act. Death is certainly preferable to such meanness.

‘I have now finished my arguments and declared my choice of death while fighting along with my few disciples. But remember, by God! you will not survive long after us. The millstone of death will roll over your heads and will grind you to powder. My father has

told me the predictions of my grandfather to this effect.

‘Now begin your attack. Let your friends join you and let what is to happen, happen. Attack and give us no time; for I have entrusted all my affairs to the powerful hand of God which controls every creature.’

Husain then called Omar bin Saad who reluctantly came out of the ranks. When he came closer, Husain said to him, ‘O Omar you wish to murder me in the hope that this illegitimate son of the illegitimately born father will grant you the states of Rai and Jerjan. By God, my Creator! you will not be able to realise your hopes. Be firm in your intentions and accomplish what you desire to do. But know for certain that you will enjoy neither the pleasures of this world nor those of the next; I see your head being carried on a lance through Kufa and boys pelting it with stones.’

This prediction of Husain irritated Omar bin Saad to such an extent that he could not control himself even for a minute and he gave the command to attack, in the following words:—

‘My soldiers! Do not lose a second and attack Husain and his friends. Bring them down under your swords, for they are no more than a handful of men.’

Before describing the battle, let us consider the effects of Husain’s words and addresses on the enemy. They were so stirring and well argued that they could have moved even the coldest hearer, provided he had some human feelings. But the irreligious forces were so intoxicated with worldly desires that the words of Husain were no more than a puff of wind to them. However, Hur, who was the first man to oppose Husain on his way from Mecca and to lead him to Karbala, did not value Husain’s appeals lightly. Each word had a galvanizing effect on

him and sent a thrill throughout his nerves. He sauntered up and down the enclosure of his tent, weeping and saying with repentance, 'O Lord! I created terror in the minds of Thy friends.' After a deep meditation on his position and the consequences of his past conduct, he called his brother, son and slave to him and, when they came, he asked them if they would accompany him wherever he went. All the three promised implicit obedience and declared their readiness to go anywhere with him. Upon this, he ordered his slave to saddle four horses and keep them ready for action, one for himself and the other three for his three companions. Hur came out of his tent, got upon his steed and went near the river bank, followed by his brother, son and slave. He was going along the bank, ostensibly to make the horses drink water, when a friend of his, Mohajir by name, happened to meet him. He observed Hur trembling with awe and his heart beating at an unusually high pitch. 'Strange!' cried Mohajir, 'why should a man of your bravery and skill in battle tremble to fight this handful of Hashimites and their friends, who are already half consumed by hunger and thirst? You are alone considered to be a match for a thousand soldiers; but now you have three thousand under you, not to speak of the innumerable forces to assist you.' 'I find myself between hell and heaven,' replied Hur, 'and I do not know which to accept.' Suddenly, he galloped off towards Husain, crying, 'I prefer heaven to hell' and his three companions followed him. This created a sensation in the armies of Omar bin Saad, who all abused and scolded Hur for deserting them at such an hour. But he dashed straight towards Husain unmindful of their threatening cries and insults. Hur took off his turban and with it he tied both his hands to his neck, a sign of repentance for his past misbehaviour, and,

with tears in his eyes, cried. 'O son of the Apostle of God! Can my crimes be forgiven and can I attain salvation through you?'. 'Certainly,' replied Husain, 'If you repent though even at this stage.' Hur got down from his horse and kissed Husain's feet. Husain treated him with every mark of respect and asked him to take rest for a time. But he requested permission to appear before the enemy and advise them. The permission being granted, he again rode to the field and cried to the forces of Omar bin Saad, 'O Kufians! May your mothers weep over your fate. You invited such a holy and innocent soul for your guidance and when he accepted your request and came here, you showed indifference and discarded him. You joined his enemies in spite of your promises to help him and stand by him to the last. You mutinied against him and dragged him to the point of death. You have held him by his collar and have surrounded him. You hold him so fast that he cannot leave his place and go away anywhere else. You have not been satisfied even after arresting him and reducing him to the state of a prisoner. You have denied him and his wife and children the water of the Euphrates which Christians and Jews freely drink and even dogs and pigs relish unchecked. The poor family of the Prophet is fainting and falling to the ground through scarcity of water. Really you have proved to be wicked followers of the Prophet in the treatment of his Ahlul-Baith. May God keep you thirsty on the last day.'

A shower of arrows was the reply Hur got for his advice, and he then returned to the presence of Husain to wait for his orders. Omar bin Saad then called Duraïd to his presence with the banner he had in his hand and, when he came, he stood under the shade of the flag, took a bow from him and shot an arrow towards Husain's

camp, saying, 'O my soldiers! You will have to give evidence before the Amir that I was the first person to send a dart towards Husain.' This action of Omar was a sign to begin the regular battle. No sooner had he done this, than ten thousand of the archers held up their bows and shot arrows in the same direction. This did not cause any mortality among Husain's soldiers, but a large number of horses were seriously wounded and some succumbed to the injuries.

Then Yasar, a slave of Ziad, son of Abiyah, came out of the enemy's ranks and began to challenge Husain's soldiers to single combat. Abdulla, son of Omar, came first to Husain, who was seated just opposite to the tent of the ladies, and, making his obeisance, requested permission to accept the challenge and proceed. The permission being granted, he confronted the enemy. Both displayed their skill in the use of arms but Abdulla proved to be the superior and brought down his sword so forcibly on the adversary's head that he could not balance himself on the saddle and came down on the ground to breathe his last. Salem, a slave of Obeidulla, rushed to the spot to avenge the murder of his friend Yasar. But some one in Husain's camp cried to Abdulla to be on the alert. In the meantime, Salem got near Abdulla and gave him a blow with his sword. Abdulla tried to save himself by lifting up his shield, but the sword fell on his fingers and severed them from his hand. With the injured hand, he made a counter-attack and brought his enemy down to roll in his blood and succumb to death. Fearing that a single combat would be disadvantageous to them, a large number of Omar's soldiers surrounded Abdulla, who fell upon them with his usual valour and killed a few more. But the archers picked him off from a distance and he fell. At his call for help, Husain

ordered his soldiers to run to his assistance. But they found him in a precarious condition and brought him to the camp where he shortly after, expired.

When Hur saw that Abdulla bin Omar had sacrificed his life for Husain, he could not control himself. He took his son to the presence of Husain and explained his readiness to sacrifice himself and all that he possessed for the grandson of the Prophet, in expectation of attaining eternal blessings in return. He secured permission for the boy, who at once got upon his steed and rode straight to the field to engage the enemy. He rushed like one resolved to die. He killed twenty-four in the onslaught, before he fell down to breathe his last. Hur had his son's body brought to the camp and threw it down at the feet of Husain, expressing his extreme joy to have owned such a son as gave up his life in defending the faith.

Hur then stood up with folded arms and humbly requested permission for himself, saying that he wanted to demonstrate his sincere remorse and heartfelt repentance by serving with his life in upholding the divine cause. Husain granted him the permission craved for, though unwillingly, and Hur once again rode towards the enemy. He recited a few lines stating his lineage and recording his dauntless courage in battles and declared his readiness to accept the challenge of even the bravest and most skilled soldier present in the armies of Omar bin Saad. At that time, Safwan bin Hansa, a soldier unexcelled by any of the Irakians in the use of weapons, was standing just by the side of Omar bin Saad, who ordered him to proceed and advise Hur first and to encounter him, if he was stubborn and unwilling to come back. Safwan confronted Hur and said, 'You have proved your shallow-mindedness by deserting the Caliph of the age, Yezid, son of Moawiah.' Hur rebuked him, saying,

‘Strange! a sensible man like you wonders, as an ignorant wretch might, at my deserting the vicious drunkard and joining Husain, son of Ali.’ This enraged the desperado, who at once lifted up his lance and launched it against Hur. But Hur evaded it and so dexterously struck with his own lance that it passed right through the chest of his adversary who at once fell to the ground breathless. This Safwan had three brothers, all of whom, angered by the defeat and fall of their brother, came out one after another to avenge him. But, ere long, they all shared the same fate.

Next Yezid bin Abu Sufian, another warrior of great fame of the Thameem tribe, expressed his willingness to encounter Hur, who waited for sometime in the field reciting a few lines in commendation of his weapons that had kept him alive and victorious up till then. But, finding a delay on the enemy’s side in sending another combatant, he returned to pay his last respects to the grandson of the Prophet. Haseen bin Nameer asked this Yezid to take advantage of Hur’s return to Husain, to overtake him by running slyly behind him and to give him a sudden mortal wound, before he should be aware of it. Hur’s vigilant eyes saw the treacherous conspiracy and perceived the enemy’s movements. With an assumed ignorance of his adversary’s actions, he slackened his pace. When Yezid was about to overtake Hur, the latter, with a brisk turn, gave him such a vehement blow with his sword that it cut right through his body and left him lifeless on the ground. Then Hur fell upon the columns of the enemy like an enraged tiger and tried to break through them. He shed much blood in the attempt and killed eighty-two of their number. Omar, foreseeing a serious disorder in his own ranks, ordered his men to use the last resource and to pick Hur off by darts. The

cowardly mob that had lost order in face of the valiant attacks of a single soldier, in whom Husain had breathed holiness and bravery, 'fell back on all sides in great haste and confusion and the archers began their destruction. Hur's body became the target of a thousand shots. A large number of these arrows pierced through the rings of his mail and entered partly into his body. One of the darts struck his horse and killed it outright. Though on foot, Hur kept on his slaughtering, until, at last, fatigued with loss of blood, he lay down, making a shout to Husain's soldiers for help. Husain's men galloped off to the spot and took him to the camp. Finding some life still in his friend, Husain lifted up his head and placed it on his lap. Tenderly passing his hand over the head of his dying follower, he praised him, saying, 'It was no fault of your mother to have named you "Hur" or "The Free." for you are free in this world and the next.' Then he wept and, lifting up his hands, he prayed to the Almighty, 'What a virtuous man Hur has been! Which Hur? the son of Riahi, one whom troubles and hardships could never harass and who never betrayed impatience even though his body was reduced to a mesh by a thousand darts, one that started up early on hearing Husain's appeals and ran to his assistance. O Lord! Accept him as thy guest in paradise and have him matched with Houris.'

Then Musa-ab, Hur's brother, got permission to engage the enemy. He also displayed great skill and bravery and fought desperately, killing a large number of the enemy, until he too fell in as noble a way as his brother.

When Hur's slave, Urva, saw his master, his son and his brother slain so brutally, he rushed against the enemy, rendered frantic by the sanguinary sight, and began slaughtering everyone that came within his reach. But it

suddenly struck him that fighting against the enemy and destroying him and even dying in supporting the noblest cause would be in vain when he had not received permission from the Imam of the day. In the heat of action, he left the field and ran to Husain and humbly explained to him his excitement and the uncontrollable state of his mind that had dragged him to the field without Husain's leave. Husain permitted him to go and keep back the advancing foe. With refreshed vigour, he fell upon the enemy and kept on mowing down as many as possible, until he was mortally wounded and expired while lying in the field. His body too was brought and laid along with his master's.

In the meantime, the enemy pressed on every side; but it was impossible for them to make a general onslaught on Husain's encampment, as the flames issuing from the ditch round the tents barred their onward march and thus they were compelled to launch their attack only through the narrow space which Husain had left for his men to pass through. The enemy attempted to make a rush through this space; but Husain's men, though comparatively very few, were sufficient to defend the passage and prevent their entry into the enclosure. The battle had to be fought on a very small front, through Husain's supernatural skill as a commander.

At this stage, Burair came to Husain and begged permission to leave the enclosure and engage the enemy. 'Go,' replied Husain, 'and tread the path of death. I shall shortly follow you.' Then he recited the Koranic verse. 'There have been some whom the decree of God (Death) has overtaken and some still in expectation of it.'

After making his obeisance, Burair marched out full of religious zeal and, after the usual recitation of a few lines to acquaint the enemy with his name and the intention with

which he had come, he cried, 'O murderers of the faithful and of the victorious supporters of the Prophet in Ohad! O slaughterers of the progeny of the Prophet! Confront us and witness how we fight.' So saying, he charged the enemy with such force that he brought down thirty of them to roll in their own blood. One Yezid bin Mekhal, proud of his bravery, came galloping from behind the ranks and challenged Burair to an encounter and said, 'O misled! I consider you an infidel.' 'Let us both pray to God,' retorted Burair, 'to have the one supporting the wrong slain at the hands of the one advocating the cause of the right, and let the world decide.' A single combat at once ensued while the soldiers on either side stopped fighting to watch it. Yezid took the initiative and displayed all his tricks but to no avail. Burair then cried to him to be on the alert, as it was his turn to take the offensive. Like a flash of lightning down came Burair's sword breaking the helmet and passing through the skull and brain. No sooner had Burair's sword terminated the impious life of Yezid than another of the enemy named Yahya bin Ous assaulted Burair from behind, took him by surprise and slew him. This Yahya returned, boasting of his valour in killing Burair, when his own nephew rebuked and silenced him. 'You boast vain gloriously of killing a pious servant of God,' he said. 'You ought to be ashamed of it.' The reproof of the nephew prevented the culprit from repeating his words of self exaltation.

Next, Wahab bin Abdulla-i-Kalbi, a Christian who had accepted Islam on the field of Karbala, after reading unmingled piety, holiness and divine glory in the face of Husain, was allowed to go out and engage the enemy. With a heart aching for the miseries and sufferings of such a pure soul and his family, he rushed against the enemy and created great havoc. After a short engagement, he came

back to his mother and asked if she was pleased with his valour, and the work he had done to keep the enemy at a distance from Husain, 'No,' replied she, 'nothing but your death in the presence of Husain will ever please me.'

A fortnight had elapsed since Wahab was married. The bride, who was now standing by Wahab's side, was shocked to hear the advice given by his mother and cried to her husband in a pathetic tone, 'Throw not thyself in the way of a serpent. Have pity on thyself and do not make me a widow.' The mother at once adjured the son, 'Take care; do not be led astray by the words of your wife, and refrain not from supporting Husain. Remember that thou canst never attain salvation except through obedience to thy parents and submission to Husain, the God-sent guide of the world.' When the bride heard this, she said to her husband 'Surely thou wilt enter paradise after thou attainest martyrdom in supporting Husain and wilt enjoy the company of the Houris. But I fear the pleasures of Heaven may prevent thee from thinking of me; hence take me along with thee to Husain and make a promise before him that thou wilt not leave me alone, but wilt take me along with thee into Paradise. My second desire is that, after your death, as there will be none to whom I can look for refuge and support, I should remain with the ladies of Husain to share their lot in all their sufferings.' The bride and the bridegroom then went to Husain and the latter reiterated before him the words of the former and made the required promise. The lady was sent to Zainub and Wahab left again to face the enemy. As he had now come more prepared to die than to win, he made such desperate attacks that the enemy fled panic-stricken in all directions and, in a short time, twelve of the infantry and thirty horsemen were counted among the killed. In the meantime, one of

the Kufians came slyly from behind and severed Wahab's right arm by a sharp blow of his sword. Wahab caught the falling sword with his left hand and charged the enemy with it, unmindful of the loss. Shortly after, a man of the Kanda tribe severed his left arm. Wahab's wife, who was witnessing this bloody scene, ran out of her tent in a passionate mood, carrying with her a tent-post. Coming near her husband, she cried, 'Labour as hard as you can to keep the tyrannical multitude at a distance from the Prophet's family and support the cause of Husain at any cost.' Wahab said, 'Are you not the same lady that was preventing me a short time before from facing the enemy? How is it that you now advise me quite the other way?' 'The pathetic appeals of Husain,' she replied, 'have melted my heart and I think life is not worth living after he and his men are slain. Hence, let us both go on fighting until we fall down together and roll in our own blood.' On hearing this, Wahab cried to Husain to advise his wife to return to the encampment. Husain sent some of his men to admonish her, saying that women in Islam were not allowed to fight. She replied, 'I prefer death to falling a captive in the hands of the Omiades.' However, Husain's men were successful in taking her back to the tents.

In the meantime, Wahab fell to the ground and his head was severed from his body. A pitiless tyrant took up the head and threw it towards Husain's tents. Wahab's mother picked it up and threw it back, saying that she considered it a bad omen to get back a thing that was sacrificed for Husain. The enemy again returned it. This process was repeated two or three times, when Wahab's bride, in the fulness of her heart, picked it up and sat down holding it in her lap. She cleaned her husband's face with her cloth, removed the blood and soil from it

and placed her own cheek on the martyr's face, weeping bitterly for their short-lived union. Suddenly, the slave of Shimar, at the orders of his master, hurried to the spot and ruthlessly struck her head with a steel club he had in his hand and she at once succumbed to the blow. Historians state that this was the first lady that suffered death at Karbala while supporting the cause of the Prophet's family. Husain dragged himself to the place where the poor lady lay lifeless with her bridegroom's head in her lap and, holding his beard with his right hand, nodded his head and said, 'How honest Wahab has been and how faithfully he has fulfilled his promise! He did not enter Paradise without his loving wife.'

Then Wahab's mother attempted to charge the enemy with a tent-post, crying, 'O nominal Moslems! The Christians in their Churches and the Jews in their Synagogues are far superior to you. I thank God for He kept my face radiant with the sacrifice I made of my son.' Husain requested her to return, saying that Islam does not enjoin fighting on the weak sex. He then told her 'Thou and thy son will stay in Paradise in the company of my grandfather, the Apostle of Allah.' She lifted up her hands and prayed, 'O Lord! do not disappoint me and do not frustrate my hopes.' 'Certainly,' replied Husain, 'He will never disappoint thee nor will He frustrate thy hopes.'

Then Omar bin Khalidal-Azadi, Khalid bin Omar, Saad bin Hanthala-i-Thameemi and Omair bin Abdulla-i-Muzjahi came out one after another from Husain's camp into the battle-field, fought as hard as they possibly could and fell in the discharge of their noble duty.

Muslim bin Ausaja next begged leave of Husain to go and encounter the enemy. In the whole of Iraq, there was none who had not heard of his fame as a warrior. Fifty of the best soldiers of Omar bin Saad started to face

this old lion, one after another, in the expectation of making a name in Arabia should they defeat the aged veteran who had seen more than eighty Arabian summers. Though enfeebled by age and three days' hunger and thirst, he slew every one of those fifty and exhibited to the world, not by words but by deeds, that it is not bread and water that keeps a man alive and strong but his faith in the Lord and the Word of the Almighty. It was not food and physical strength that made him victorious and caused the fifty to be slaughtered by him; but his success was chiefly due to his *faith and spiritual vigour*. The remaining soldiers prevented one another from facing the infuriated lion and requested Omar bin Saad to order the bowmen to form a circle round Muslim and kill him with arrows. A shower of darts from all sides reduced Muslim's body to a mesh of holes and he fell to the ground crying to Husain for help. Husain and Habib-ibni-Muzahar hurried to the spot where Muslim was lying in the agony of death. Husain blessed his dying friend and repeated the verse which he usually recited on such occasions, 'There have been some whom the Decree of God has overtaken and some still in expectation of it who have not changed their minds.'

Habib approached Muslim and said, 'I am so grieved to see you in this condition that I cannot express my feelings to you. But there is this consolation that Paradise is just before you with all its pleasures.' Muslim, recognising the voice of his friend and countryman, replied in a faint tone, 'May God be pleased with you and shower His blessings on you.' Habib said, 'Were it not certain that I shall follow you on the path of death, I would ask you to leave me your last wishes to be faithfully executed. But, as I am resolved to join you shortly, I express my inability to execute anything entrusted to me.' Muslim

then requested Husain to come nearer and, when he found him close by him, he, seizing a corner of Husain's coat, said to Habib, 'My advice to you is that you should hold this fast and do not let it go from your hands.' Habib avowed his resolute attachment to Husain. Suddenly, Muslim opened wide his eyes, looked steadily towards Husain and said, 'I go to your grandfather to inform him of your arrival there within a short time.' No sooner had he finished this sentence than he shuddered from head to foot and lay lifeless on the ground.

Muslim had a son who was seriously affected by the death of his father and wanted to avenge his death in support of Husain. But Husain advised him to abandon the idea, as the young man's mother had none but him towards whom she could look for support and would die of a broken heart, if he was killed in the engagement. Husain's advice had the desired effect, and the boy realising that his mother would be left helpless by his death, went to her to explain his position. The religious mother, seeing her son still alive, gave vent to her zeal in these words, 'It astonishes me to note that you desire to have your life spared, leaving Husain exposed to danger. I will never be pleased with you until you die in Husain's cause.' These words filled him with renewed enthusiasm, in him and he at once took permission of Husain and rode to the field followed by his mother. The son charged the enemy in great fury and the mother encouraged him from behind. He made a dash and killed thirty of the enemy but was soon killed and beheaded in the presence of his mother. A merciless tyrant threw the severed head towards her and she picked it up with maternal love and began kissing it and wept bitterly to have lost such a pious and obedient son. The scene drew tears from the eyes of the enemy and also those of Husain's ranks.

The Rouzathus Safa, which gives a detailed account of the martyrs of Karbala, states that, after Muslim's son was slain, Hilal bin Nafe-i Bajalli rushed towards the enemy and killed Qees in an encounter. He then fell upon the columns and slew thirteen of the enemy. He lost both his arms in the engagement and, when rendered unable to defend himself, he was captured and taken before Shimar, who at once ordered him to be beheaded.

Hilal's son Nafe then came out for an engagement and, after killing some more of the enemy, among whom was Muzahim bin Haris, a warrior of note, he too fell as nobly as his father.

At this stage, Omar bin Hajjaj, an experienced veteran in the armies of Omar bin Saad, who was posted to guard the bank of the Euphrates, noticing how great were their losses compared with Husain's, cried to the officers under command, 'It is not wise to lose time and men in single combats. Husain's men, thirsty and starving as they are for the last three days, have proved to be far superior and will kill you all to a man, if this kind of warfare continues. Make a general onslaught on the encampment of Husain and slay all its inmates in a single effort.'

Omar bin Saad appreciated the advice and appointed Omar bin Hajjaj to lead the onset, Shimar being ordered to stand behind him with his thousands to back up the offensive. As it had already been found that an attack over the circling ditch was fruitless, a general assault with overwhelming numbers was to be made through the entrance of Husain's enclosure. Immediately, a stout defensive began and developed into a serious hand to hand fight. Omar bin Saad sent five hundred of his archers to attack Husain's men from a distance, as they were engaged in defending the encampment. But, on the appearance of the bowmen, Omar bin Hajjaj refused to command his

men, thinking it was cowardly and mean to destroy the few Hashimites and their supporters with the help of archers in addition to thousands engaged in capturing Husain's tents. He was, however, replaced by Haseen bin Nameer who lacked even that sense of shame which Omar bin Hajjaj possessed. Husain's men fought desperately and attacked the aggressors so vigorously that the enemies' heads rolled on the ground like melons in a plentiful season. But the arrow shots from a distance could not be guarded against. Most of Husain's horses fell victims to them. Fourteen horsemen and an equal number of footmen were killed in defending the grandson of the Prophet. The names of the martyrs on this occasion, as mentioned by Tibri and other historians, are as follows :—

1. Naiem bin Ajlan-i-Ansari.
2. Omar bin Kaab.
3. Hanthala bin Omar-i-Shaibani.
4. Kasith bin Zohier.
5. Krush bin Zohair.
6. Kannana bin Atheeq.
7. Omar bin Zee-athuz Zabi.
8. Farghana bin Malik.
9. Saif bin Malik al Omair.
10. Abdur Rahman bin Abdulla-i-Kadri.
11. Majma bin Abdulla-i-Auzezi.
12. Hannan bin Haris-i-Salmani.
13. Amrul Khandi.
14. Halasi bin Amr-i-Rasibi.
15. Sawad bin Abi Omair-i-Fahmi.
16. Zair bin Omar, slave of Amir bin Hamuq-i-Khazai.
17. Habla bin Ali-i-Shaibani.
18. Ali Omara bin Ali Salama.
19. Noman bin Omar-i-Rasibi.

20. Masood bin Hajjaj.
21. Hajjaj.
22. Zohair bin Bashar.
23. Ummar bin Hisan-i-Thai.
24. Abdul bin Omair.
25. Aslam bin Kaseer-i-Azadi.
26. Zohair bin Muslim-i-Azadi.
27. Abdulla bin Yezeedi-Qeesi.
28. *Abdulla bin Urwai Gaffari.*

Of the above-mentioned martyrs, the deeds of the last, Abdulla bin Urwai Gaffari, deserve a detailed narrative. He was an old gentleman who had witnessed the battle-fields of Badr and Hunain during the time of the Prophet and was present in the engagement of Suffin along with Ali. He faced the enemy and said, 'The tribes of Bani Gaffar, Bani Khunsuf and Bani Nazar know that I have always been a supporter of the Prophet and his children. May God, the Creator of Earth, Vegetables and Animals bless them.' So saying, he charged the enemy and killed twenty-five of them before he himself fell.

From this, our readers can understand how dauntless Husain's men were and, when an aged man of Urwa's type could slay twenty-five of the enemy, what younger men with younger blood would have done in supporting Husain. Such being the selfless efforts of the Defenders, the huge multitude accompanying Omar bin Saad failed in their efforts and had to fall back, with a view to repair and regain their lost order.

In the heat of action, in the presence of swords, lances and arrows and in the jaws of death, Husain looked up to the Sun to ascertain if it had crossed the meridian so that he might perform his mid-day prayers. Just at this time, a friend of his, Abdulla, son of Abdulla-i-Ansari, better known as Abu Thamama-i-Saidani, approached him and

said, 'May my soul be sacrificed for thee. I am resolved to defend thee until my body bleeds from head to foot. But now my sincere desire is that I should perform the noon prayers behind thee.' Husain wondered at the coincidence of ideas and blessed him, saying, 'May God enlist your name among His real worshippers; for you have thought of prayers at such a time.' He then asked the wreck of his little army to announce to the surrounding hosts that the grandson of the Prophet demanded an interval and a short cessation of action, so that he might perform his noon prayers. Omar's soldiers heard this and began discussing whether Husain should be allowed the interval. In the meantime, Haseen bin Nameer cried to Husain, 'Your prayers will not be heard.' Habib bin Muzahir could not bear to hear this insulting and audacious remark and replied, 'O mutineer! will thy prayers be heard and not those of the Prophet's grandson?' Haseen then attempted to assault Habib, who was then standing close to Husain, to save him from an unexpected attack, and was preparing himself for the prayer. Seeing Haseen approach speedily, he said to Husain, 'Let me perform the prayers not in this world but in Paradise, not behind thee but behind thy grandfather.' He rushed forward to meet the advancing enemy. Haseen first attacked with a sword; but Habib eluded it and struck with his dagger right in the face of his opponent. The cowardly brute lost a portion of his nose and a nervous collapse compelled him to turn tail and flee. The horsemen under his command intervened and attempted to engage Habib who fell upon them like a ferocious lion and killed sixty-two of them, according to the statement of Muhammad bin Abee Thabib, a traditionist and historian of some repute. A member of the Bani Thameem tribe hid himself somewhere and, when Habib advanced chasing the retreating

enemy, he came behind him and thrust his lance into his back so forcibly that Habib lost his balance and came down. Haseen bin Nameer now came shamelessly to his dying adversary and severed his head in retaliation for his lost nose. Husain attacked and scattered the mob that had assembled round Habib's body and, coming near it, he prayed for his friend, saying, 'May God bless thee. Thou wert reciting every night the whole of the holy Koran along with me.'

Husain then returned to his encampment with Habib's body and announced to his shattered company his intention of performing his Zohar prayers. When all his friends were ready, he performed 'the prayer of fear,' used only in cases of extremity. He asked Saied bin Abdulla and Zohair bin Qeen to stand in front of the Imam to cover his body and protect it from possible injury. After half the prayer was done, they had to come behind the Imam and two others of the worshippers had to take their places. When the small party was engaged in prayers, a shower of darts came from the enemy's side. Saied's body was struck by some of these and he fell down to die, saying, 'O Lord! Let Thy peace be on Muhammad and show him what Thou seest of my sufferings in defending his progeny.'

Husain thus having finished his noon prayers, addressed his remaining friends and said, 'My supporters! Lift up your eyes and behold; the doors of Paradise are open for you. Its palaces are decked to welcome you. My friends who have just perished are in the company of the holy Prophet and my father Ali. These and the angels are eagerly waiting to receive you. Therefore, enhance your efforts in defending the faith and repelling the enemy from the tents containing the ladies related to the Prophet.'

At this time, the ladies were raising woeful cries. Some were mourning for their husbands, some for their children and others for their brothers and other relations. Now, they all joined together and addressed the remaining friends of Husain and said 'O Defenders! Support the divine religion; send back the enemy from the tents containing the ladies of your Prophet. Prevent the tyrants from reaching your Imam who is the son of your Prophet's daughter. God is now testing your sincerity and faithfulness in connection with the Prophet's Ahlul-Baith.'

These pathetic appeals greatly moved Husain's friends who began to shed tears at the words of despair they heard from the helpless ladies. They plucked up courage and strength again and replied, 'We are ready with our bodies, blood and souls to be sacrificed for yours. By God! None can even intend to do you harm as long as there are souls in our bodies. Believe us, we have made a gift of our souls to you; our bodies have been dedicated to swords, lances and arrows and thus our whole existences are surrendered to hardships and sufferings until most willingly we drink of the cup of death. Blessed are the heads that roll on the ground in supporting your cause.'

Zohair ibnul Qeen was so much moved by the appeals of the ladies that he came to the presence of Husain and, with tears in his eyes, said that he could not bear to see any longer the distressed condition of the ladies and prayed for permission to face the enemy. Husain allowed him to go. He first charged the right wing of the enemy and repelled them with a heavy loss. He then engaged the left wing and killed altogether one hundred and twenty of the number according to the statement of Muhammad bin Abi Thaleb. But Abu Makhnaf's estimate of those killed by Zohair is seventy-seven. Kaseer bin

Abdulla-i-Shobi and Mohajir bin Ous brought him down by the repeated blows of their swords and spears. At this stage, Husain somehow reached this old friend of his and blessed him, saying, 'May the Lord not keep you away from his presence! May he curse those that have slain you and turn them into monkeys and hogs!'

Then, out of the remaining few, Abu Thamamai Saidavi, Hajjaj bin Masrooq, Mubarak, Yahya bin Kasser, Yahya bin Muslim, Hanthala bin Saad, Abdur Rahman bin Abdullahi-Yezeni and Omar bin Khathabai Ansari, obtained permission, one after another, and shared the enviable death of martyrdom after killing a large number of the enemy while defending the God-sent Imam of the day.

Abu Zar-i-Gaffari, a pious and venerable associate of the Prophet, owned an Abyssinian slave named Joun, who was left in charge of Husain at the time of his master's death. Husain generously allowed him a seat at his table and provided him with clothing and every other thing he needed. Now, when this aged slave witnessed his protector entangled in the worst difficulties and saw how some of his friends sacrificed their souls for him, he thought it high time to beg permission to face the enemy. Finding him resolved to die, Husain advised him to abandon the idea and said, 'In expectation of enjoying peace and comfort, you had taken shelter under me after your master's death. Throw not yourself in danger. I give you full liberty to go in any direction you prefer.' The faithful black replied, 'O son of the Apostle of God! How mean it would be to accompany you in prosperity and to desert you in adversity! I am of unknown parentage. My colour is dark and my body stinking. Is it on this account that you prevent me from brightening my face, from ennobling myself through martyrdom and from

entering into Paradise? By God! I will never part from you until my dirty blood mixes with the pure and holy blood that runs in your body.'

Husain was thus compelled to grant him permission and he was soon seen charging the irreligious foe with great vehemence and slaughtering many of them. But he could not withstand for a long time the enemy's attack from all directions with swords, arrows and lances and had to fall, crying to Husain for help. Husain reached the spot and prayed for him in the following words:—
'O Lord! Make his face radiant and his body fragrant. Raise him up on the Day of Judgment along with the virtuous and grant him a clear head to understand who Muhammad and his Ahlul-Baith are.'

Imam Zain-ul-abidin states that, when he returned to Karbala from Syria to bury the martyrs, an extraordinary smell of musk was coming out of Joun's body.

Next to Joun, Omar bin Khalid-i-Saidavi, Said bin Omar bin Abil Mutha, Khurra bin Khurrai Ansari, Malik bin Anas-i-Maliki and Omar bin Mutha-i-Jafi engaged the enemy one after another. They all fell and suffered death in upholding the noble cause, except the second, namely Said bin Omar bin Abil Mutha, a man much respected for his noble birth and piety, who lay wounded on the field. But, when he heard the thrilling news of the inhuman slaughter of the Prophet's grandson, he rose up in a mad fury, unmindful of his injuries. and picking up a sword from those lying on the field, attacked the enemy with great vehemence. He suffered a mortal wound and his head was severed from his body.

After these, a young orphan, who had lost his father the same morning, was encouraged by his mother to face the field. The name of this boy is not mentioned in histories but this much is recorded that the mother dressed him

with her own hands and tied a small sword to his belt. She came to the presence of Husain and, with due reverence, prayed for permission. Husain wept at this unique sight and wondered at the zeal of the mother and the boy. The permission was granted and the boy facing the enemy said, 'Happy am I to have a master like Husain, the Delight of the Prophet's heart. He is as bright as the Sun and as beautiful as the full moon.' So saying, he assaulted the enemy with a courage much greater than could be expected from a boy of his age. But the repeated blows of the enemy soon brought him down. His head was cut off and thrown towards the mother, who fell upon the enemy, with the fury of a tigress that loses her cub, and killed two of the tyrants. But Husain rushed out and brought her back to the tents, reminding her that women were forbidden in Islam to fight.

Then Aubis bin Shabeeb and his slave Shoozab were allowed at their request to face the field and to keep back the enemy. When the former challenged the soldiers of Omar bin Saad, no one would come out for a single combat as most of them were aware of his dauntless courage and skill. He fell upon them, and went on mowing down every one that came within his reach. But the cowardly mob, unable to approach him, attacked him from a distance and stoned him to death. With the master, perished the faithful slave, in trying to save him from the blows.

Next, two persons, Abdulla and Abdur Rahman, issued from Husain's encampment and were both slaughtered, after a short display of their bravery.

Imam Zain-ul-abidin had a Turkish slave, who was struck with horror, when he witnessed the distressed condition of his master's father. He came humbly to Husain to request permission to go. But he was sent

back with this reply, 'I am not your master and have no control over you. Go to your master, my son, and get his permission.' Upon this, the disappointed slave came to his master and was shampooing his legs so as to awaken him from a state of lethargy. A stream of tears flowed from the slave's eyes and wetted the feet of the ailing master, who, feeling a cooling sensation unexpected at a time when water was not to be had, opened his eyes and beheld his slave shedding tears pitifully. 'What makes you weep?' questioned Imam -Zain-ul-abidin. 'Your father,' replied the other, 'has lost most of his supporters, and it pains me to have my life spared and not to assist him at such an hour.' 'Go and fight on my behalf,' said the Imam 'and arrest the march of my father's enemies.' The slave wiped his tears and returned to Husain joyfully to inform him of the permission he had received.. He now appeared before the enemy and fought like one resolved to die. He killed a large number of the enemy and fell quite cheerfully when he received a mortal wound. Husain hurried to him and taking his head in his own lap began cleaning the face and removing the blood and soil from it. The fortunate slave opened wide his eyes and finding himself honoured by Husain in such a way passed away with a smile of complete satisfaction and joy.

One of the remaining supporters of Husain, Yezid bin Ziad by name, was a bowman and possessed only eight arrows in his quiver. He came out of the enclosure and shot all the eight arrows, four of which missed the mark. The other four killed four of the enemy. But he was soon surrounded and killed by the soldiers of Omar bin Saad.

Next Yezid bin Mohajir and Saif bin Abil Haris came out to encounter the enemy. They fought with great

valour and skill, but could not withstand the attacks from all sides and fell while trying to prevent the enemy's entry into the enclosure.

Mualla bin Mualla, Tharrimah bin Adi, Muhammad bin Mulha, Jabin bin Urva-i-Ansari, Abdur Rahman bin Kadri and his brother, Malik bin Ous and Anees bin Minhal are also mentioned by some authors in the list of Husain's supporters that suffered death in defending the faith. Syed bin Tha-oos, in his book of Lahoof, includes some twenty more names among the martyrs that fought for Husain and were killed on the field of Karbala. Thus, the whole number of Husain's friends ranges between seventy-two and one hundred and twenty according to different authors.

Before the battle, it was arranged by Husain's disciples that, as long as a single individual among them remained, none of the members of the Prophet's family should be allowed to face the battle-field. They considered it disloyal and irreligious to live and see Husain and his relations dying in their presence and not to suffer on their behalf. Now, when all their number was exhausted, Husain's relations determined to protect the Imam and his children. They arranged to send the distant relations first, then those closely related to him and last his children.

Muslim's sons, who were waiting with boiling blood for their own turn, were the first to beg Husain for permission to face the field. They had lost their father and two younger brothers in Kufa a month before the Karbala Day. The mother of these boys, own sister of Abbas, deserves the praise of all the world for her self-denial and the readiness with which she allowed her sons to go into the jaws of death for the noble cause of religion.

Abdulla, the eldest son of Muslim, dragged himself to the presence of Husain and expressed his readiness to face the field. But Husain advised him to refrain from exposing himself to danger and to take his mother from Karbala to some safer place where she and her remaining children might lead peaceful lives. Husain added that the loss of Muslim and his two younger sons was more than enough for the unfortunate family and further disaster would cause the wife of Muslim to die of a broken heart. But the noble youth replied, 'Uncle! We are not so cowardly and mean as to prefer transitory pleasures to eternal bliss, and we trust that you will accept the humble present of our souls as sacrifices for you.' Husain, in the height of sorrow, bent his head down to drop a few tears and the brave lad rode to the field, full of enthusiasm and a burning desire to risk his life. The thick columns of the enemy were baffled and panic-stricken by the vehement attacks of this Hashimite boy. In the heat of action, as the boy stood to pause a minute after a serious charge and was just removing sweat from his eye-brow, an unexpected dart transfixed his hand and pinned it to his forehead. When rendered unable to use his right arm any more, he was brought down and killed by the combined attacks of Amar bin Sabeeh and Asad bin Malik.

Next, Muhammad, Muslim's younger son, came out and was killed after a short engagement at the hands of Abu Jarhamai Asadi and Laqeeth bin Yus.

Muslim, son of Akheel, had six brothers and three nephews, all of whom had accompanied Husain throughout his risky journey and were present now on the field of Karbala. The names of Akheel's sons or Muslim's brothers are recorded as (1) Jaffer, (2) Abdur Rahman, (3) Musa, (4) Aun, (5) Ali and (6) Abdulla, and those of

Muslim's nephews as (1) Muhammad bin Saied, (2) Jaffer bin Muhammad and (3) Ahmad bin Muhammad. When these witnessed the religious zeal of the two sons of Muslim, they considered it a shame to survive any longer. One after another, they appeared before the enemy and, after displaying Hashimite skill and courage, they all shared the fate of Muslim's children.

When Zainub, Husain's sister, saw Akhil's children slaughtered in protecting her brother, she looked with a frown upon her own sons and reproached them for not taking the lead of the Hashimites in sacrificing their souls. The boys pleaded the disinclination of their uncle to permit them to face the field and expressed their readiness to defend the Imam at the cost of their lives. Upon this, Zainub called for Husain and humbly requested him to allow her sons to suffer death in arresting the march of the advancing foe. 'No uncle,' replied Husain, 'can ever allow his nephews to die for his sake.' But Zainub persisted and, after a long conversation, succeeded in securing the permission for her sons.

Thus, the two boys, sons of Zainub and Abdulla bin Jaffer, nine and eight years old, respectively, mounted on their ponies and rushed to the field with their small swords hanging at their waists. They had small coloured turbans on their heads and the Hashimite locks were flying on both sides of their faces. A sight of thousands of blood-thirsty ruffians with drawn swords would have made adults tremble, but the lion-hearted sons of Hashimite parents counted them nothing more than a herd of timid deer and charged them as heavily as their young arms could allow. But the united attacks of the innumerable mob soon brought them down. Husain and Abbas ran to protect their bodies from being trampled under horses and brought them to the tent of Zainub.

The mother without the least display of distress, got up and fell down prostrate to thank the Lord for the best use she could make of her children. She then came near the corpses of her dear sons, reddened her face with their blood and laid them on the Prophet's carpet, as she had promised them. Then she announced her satisfaction at the behaviour of her children and excused them the milk they had sucked of her in their infancy. No nation, no record or history can ever produce the example of a mother, so nobly sacrificing her own sons for Right and Truth and displaying no grief or distress at the loss of such beautiful and obedient children.

Next was the turn of Hasan's sons. Five of them were now present at Karbala, and they had all resolved to attain martyrdom in defending the faith. The name of Qasim is the most prominent. According to some authors, he was married to a daughter of Husain and the holy ceremony was celebrated that very morning. Whether this be true or otherwise, it can beyond doubt be asserted that the union was proposed, though its accomplishment might or might not have taken place. People who do not believe this world to be the final destination of man and have faith in the perpetuity of the following world, where the fruits of present actions will be reaped, will not hesitate to accept the justification of a marriage brought about to continue in the next life, though not here. Further, Hasan's son could have no better match than Husain's daughter and *vice versa*. People inheriting noble blood can alone understand the necessity of a union of two such members of a noble family, each of whom could balance the other in piety and purity of blood.

When this young man, who was in his teens, came to his uncle for permission, the latter gazed at him with

loving eyes and embracing him fast he shed tears pitifully. The woeful scene drew tears from the eyes of every onlooker. Then Qasim humbly begged for permission which was bluntly refused. This roused the spirit of Qasim who fell down at the feet of his uncle, began kissing them with extreme submission and humility and begged him pathetically to allow him to engage the enemy. In the end the permission craved for was granted, though with great reluctance, and the young man rode away to the field amidst an uproar of cries of despair from the ladies.

Omar bin Saad had reserved a large number of military experts to answer the need when the Hashimites challenged his soldiers for single combat. Among these was a Syrian named Azrak who was now asked to attack and kill this young Hashimite. But he deemed it disgraceful to fight with a mere boy and suggested the despatch of one of his sons for the purpose. After a short engagement, Qasim's sword cut right through his adversary's body and left him lifeless on the ground. This enraged the other sons of Azrak, numbering three, who all came one after another to avenge their brother. But they fared no better and the Hashimite skill of Qasim despatched them all. The loss of four sons infuriated Azrak who came grunting like a wild boar and charged Qasim with great intensity. When Husain witnessed a giant like Azrak facing his young nephew, he took off his turban and, holding it on his palms, prayed for the success of Qasim and the glory of Hashim's name in the unequal combat. The ladies inside, among whom was Husain's daughter, raised a chorus of 'Amen.' Husain's sincere prayer, supported by the 'Amen' of the distressed hearts was soon granted, and Qasim, eluding his adversary's blow, brought down his own sword so forcibly on his

neck that the head flew away to a distance and the body collapsed, after a vehement struggle.

Then Qasim fell upon the columns of the enemy like an enraged lion and mowed down as many as seventy. Hameed bin Muslim, one deputed by Yezid to record the events of the field of Karbala, states that, when Qasim's attacks had humiliated the best of Yezid's soldiers, one of them Saad bin Urva bin Nafeel who was standing by his side, cried: 'Somehow I will bring down this Hashimite who has caused so much death in our ranks.' On hearing this, Hameed replied 'For the sake of his beauty and valour, I would prefer to be attacked and killed by him to drawing my sword against him.' The stone-hearted wretch was influenced in no way by the words of Hameed, but went forward and hid himself in a depression in the ground. When the enemy was fleeing in disorder chased by Qasim, Saad bin Urva got out of the pit after Qasim had advanced some distance and coming slyly behind him struck his head with a sword. Unable to withstand the blow which had fractured the skull, Qasim fell down crying to Husain for help. But alas! Before Husain reached the spot, the body of Qasim was trampled by a number of horsemen. Husain was extremely grieved to behold the body of his nephew unusually flattened by the repeated trampling and some parts of it lying scattered on the field. Moved by the scene, Husain cried to his nephew and said 'How hard it is for thy uncle, that thou shouldst call him for help and he not be able to help thee! 'All the help he could give would not be sufficient.'

Then the body was carried to the tent of the ladies and, when it was laid on the ground, Husain cried to the weepers 'Patience, Patience, O Ahlul-Baith! O my relations! For, after this day, we will not have to experience any disgrace or hardship.' Then Husain lifted up

his hands and prayed 'O Lord! if Thou hast withheld Thy assistance in worldly success, let it accumulate for my glory in the next world and deal with the aggressors as Thy justice dictates.'

Then Abdulla-i-Akbar, Abu Bakr and Ahmed, other sons of Hasan, came out one after another and kept up the tradition of Hashimite bravery. Ahmed, the last of these abovenamed, created great havoc in the enemy's ranks, when his turn came. After a hard fight, he returned to his uncle, Husain, and said 'Can you cool my liver with a mouthful of water so that I may gain strength to destroy the enemies of God?' 'O Son of my brother!' replied Husain 'wait a while and your grandfather will quench your thirst so that you will never after feel thirsty.' Then the young man made a desperate attack on the enemy and killed fifty of them in a single effort. Then he turned on the other side and brought down sixty more to make up the number of one hundred and ten altogether. After a short time, he was mortally wounded and his body brought to the tents.

The next relations of Husain that had to go and fight the enemy were the sons of Ali, half-brothers of Husain. The first of these that rushed to the field was Abdulla bin Ali, own brother of Abbas. He was otherwise called Abu Muhammad. After a short display of Hashimite bravery, he suffered a mortal wound at the hands of Hani bin Sabeeth al Khazrani. Then Jaffer al Akbar, Osman and Muhammad Al Asghar proceeded to the field, fought as bravely as Abdulla and shared the same fate.

Hafiz Jalal-ud-din, a world renowned Sunni author, in his book Rouzathul Ahabab, makes mention of another son of Ali, named Aun, who fought for Husain on the field of Karbala. He was born to Asma binth-i-Omais, a widow-

of Abu Bakr, whom Ali had afterwards married. He was younger than Muhammad-i-Hanafia and older than all other brothers born to Ali by his wives other than Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. Aun had inherited unusual courage and bravery from his father Ali.

Now when he found his brother Husain in hard straits and some of his relations killed in defending him, he thought it a shame to shrink from his duty to the Imam and to spare his own life. When he came to the Imam and expressed his desire to break through the columns of the enemy, Husain advised him not to risk his life by such desperate actions but to challenge the enemy one after another, as most of the previous martyrs had done. But he replied 'One resolved to die does not care for name or fame; nor is such a man afraid of overwhelming numbers.' So saying, he dashed against the enemy and pierced through the thickest columns creating great disaster. With undiminished vigour and activity, he turned back, destroying the enemy with an equal vigour and reached the presence of the Imam. He then kissed Husain's feet and said that a desire to see the Imam once again had brought him to the encampment. Husain asked him to take rest for some time, as he was already tired and weary. But he replied 'Life is a burden to me and I should like to get rid of the burden as early as possible in the discharge of my duties to you.' Husain suggested that he should change his horse, as it was fatigued and unfit for further action. Aun took another horse and proceeded to the field. Among the enemy was present one Saleh bin Sayyar, who had once got drunk during Ali's Caliphate. According to Islamic law, he had to receive punishment and Ali had deputed his son Aun to administer the law. This the culprit remembered and he now found an opportunity to retaliate. He came

in front of Aun and began to pour out a volley of abuse. With singular dexterity, Aun brought him down in one blow and silenced him for ever. Bedr bin Sayyar, Saleh's brother, came up at once and wanted to avenge his brother. But he too was mortally wounded and shared the fate of his brother. In the meantime, Khalid bin Talha took advantage of Aun's engagement and gave him a hard blow on his head. Aun fell, saying, 'In the name of the Lord and with His assistance, I attain martyrdom in accordance with the laws of the Prophet.' So saying, he breathed his last and lay among the killed.

The next martyr was Abbas, who has often been mentioned in this and previous chapters of this book as the strongest supporter of Husain. He was a son of Ali by his Hashimite wife, Ummul Baneen. The details of her marriage are noted down in histories in the following way:—

After the death of Fatima, Ali asked his brother Akheel (whose knowledge of the genealogies of the noble families of Arabia was unexcelled) to suggest to him the name of the noblest lady he could obtain as a partner. He added that he wanted to beget a noble, brave and faithful son, so that he might be serviceable to Husain in the hardships of Karbala, as foretold by the Prophet. Akheel's choice fell upon Ummul Baneen, daughter of Khiram, son of Khalid bin Rabia. Among the Hashimites, hers was the noblest family after that of the Prophet and was famous for the bravery of its male members. The union was accomplished and four sons and a daughter were born. The daughter, Ruqayya, was given in marriage to Muslim, son of Akheel. Of the four sons, three, Osman, Jaffer and Abdulla, have just been mentioned as having fallen in defending Husain. Abbas was then thirty-four years old. He had married a granddaughter of Abbas, an uncle of

the Prophet. His wife and children were now present with those of Husain.

Abbas was restlessly waiting for his turn and, when it came, Husain refused to grant permission, saying that he could not afford to lose his only surviving brother. Bitterly weeping in despair, he was walking along the side of the ladies' tent when a horrible scene caught his eyes. The young folk were lying panting, as if to die for lack of food and water. Among these, was Sukaina, Husain's young daughter, whose faint voice was overheard by Abbas. She was saying 'Uncle ! should I die of thirst, while a healthy and well-built uncle like you is alive ? ' These words were more than arrows to the heart of Abbas. He took up a dry, contracted leathern bag and, with it, came to the presence of Husain in an uncontrollable state of excitement and expressed his resolution to die or get water for the dying children. Finding that a further restraint would be unwholesome, Husain allowed him to go and get water for the ailing children.

Abbas had a very fine figure and had secured the title of the ' Moon of the Bani Hashim,' on account of his noble appearance and well-proportioned form. The face resembled that of Ali in almost all its features and was beautified by joint brow and a flowing beard. His stature was more than ordinary.

His bravery was acknowledged in all circles and it was on this account that Shimar attempted to separate him from Husain and secure his services for Ibn-i-Ziad. He had brought from the Governor of Kufa instructions to spare the lives of Abbas and his brothers with the statement that their mother was related to him. Shimar called Abbas, showed him the paper and said to him, ' Why should you unnecessarily entangle yourself in difficulties ? Husain is by no means superior to you for both you and

he are equal, being sons of the same father, Ali. He has lost his sense and hence does not yield to the proposal of Ibn-i-Ziad. A wise man like you ought not to suffer on his account. Desert him and come along ; I shall secure a 'high post for you under the governor of Kufa.' Abbas lost control over himself, when he heard these misleading words, and, unsheathing his sword, he cried ' Damned be you and your instructions. Do you advise me to desert my master and to join the infidel ? '

The Ahlul-Baith were quite confident of Husain's life, as long as Abbas was living. But now, when he was leaving the presence of Husain, more determined to die than to live, the ladies cried in despair ' Now we lose all hopes of Husain. He cannot live after Abbas is gone.'

No sooner was the permission granted than Abbas started to the field. But the separation was hard for Husain and he ran behind his brother, so as to cast one more glance on the face which he might not see again. Abbas, with due respect, jumped down from his horse and kissed Husain's feet. Husain embraced him and then returned shedding tears.

The grand form of Abbas and the fame he had obtained as a warrior, in every nook and corner of Arabia made the enemy tremble. When this dauntless lion made his appearance in the field, several thousands of the cowardly folk intervened between him and the river to prevent him from carrying water for Husain and his surviving friends. He stood in front of them and recited the following lines to give vent to his ideas :—

' We are ourselves swords of the Hashimite tribe and are sharper than the sharpest edges to shed your blood. O, sons of adultery and of the opposers of right ! Alas ! if our grandfather, the Prophet, had survived and seen the calamities that his progeny has been made to suffer !

Death by the sword is glorious when paradise is its fruit. Damned be this world and its transitory pleasures. We expect salvation of our grandfather, the Prophet.'

When the enemy heard these lines, they at once charged him from all sides, but Abbas with a loud roar fell upon them and killed every individual that came within his reach. One Marad bin Saif, a well-built veteran in the armies of Omar bin Saad, was filled with fury and shame when he observed Abbas causing destruction and killing the best of Yezid's soldiers. He tore his own clothes in an angry excitement and cried to his friends 'Shame on you! A single Hashimite has been baffling and ruining you. If each one of you were to throw a handful of dust on this man's head, he would be suffocated to death. Now let every one that has sworn allegiance to Yezid withdraw from the field. I will alone face Abbas and bring him down in no time.' Fully clothed in armour and having a steel helmet on his head, he rushed towards Abbas with a lance in his hand. Abbas advanced to meet him. Marad cried 'O boy! throw down thy sword and let me see thy skill in the use of a lance. All those that have fought with thee and been defeated were lacking in the required dash and treated thee tenderly. I am one from whose heart God hath removed the sense of pity and hath filled it with a merciless will to revenge. My attacks have reduced fullgrown and gigantic foes to submission. But it is you and you alone and your face and age that have excited pity in me. I advise you to return and not to ruin yourself. A word is enough for the wise; remember that I have never before been merciful to any on earth. Listen to my advice, if you wish to lead a peaceful and happy life. If not, you will fall a prey to the worst calamity.' Abbas replied 'O enemy of God! It is your merciless temper that is about to ruin you. Your words cannot

influence the sun; nor can your hardness and severity split up the ocean. It is quite impossible for me to agree to your terms. Your commendations on my dignified form and your assertion of my youth can in no way harm me, for I am fully aware of my mental capacity and the nobility of my birth. Remember that the secret of a man's greatness lies in his unshakable faith in God, in his exertions for religion and in understanding the real enemy. His capabilities are tested while he faces stubborn enemies, in the use of his weapons, in defeating his opponents, in enduring hardships patiently, in his thanking the Lord both in prosperity and adversity and in trusting the Lord in all his affairs. A man possessing these qualities is never afraid of any calamity. O enemy of God! you are aware of my connection with the Prophet and you know that I am a branch of the Prophet-tree. Such a branch, whose trust lies wholly in God, can never be shaken by the blasts of vice and evil temptations and can never submit to the sword. A son of Ali can neither tremble nor retrace his footsteps. He cannot be afraid of any opponent; nor can he dread the opposition of infidels and mutineers and turn tail in battle. I am never displeased with the action of the Almighty. I am a leaf of the Prophet-tree and your expectation to gain me over can only be in vain and your efforts fruitless. I am not a man to weep over the loss of this world and evade death when it comes to me, for paradise is a much happier residence than this world. There is many a youth that is superior to grown up men, in the eyes of God.'

Infuriated at this cutting reply, Marad dashed against Abbas and launched his lance. But Abbas apparently took no notice of it and did not even take up his shield to protect his body. When the lance was about to touch his body, with a quick motion of the hand, Abbas caught it

and gave such a strong pull that the adversary lost his grip of the lance and even his balance on the saddle. Soon Marad was seen on the ground and his lance in the hand of Abbas. Abbas wounded the horse of Marad and rendered it unfit for further action. Shimar at once cried to Marad's slave, Sariqa, to take another horse, Tavia, and to hurry up to Marad with it. When Marad saw his slave with a horse, he cried to him like an injured camel to lose no time and to bring the horse before death should overtake him. But Abbas, with a brisk ride, met the slave before he could reach his master and threw him down with a stroke of the captured lance. He left his own horse, that returned at once to Husain, and, riding upon the new horse, Tavia, went back to meet the enemy once more. At this sight, Marad grew pale, lost his presence of mind and cried 'Alas! riding on my horse Abbas will kill me with my own lance.' When Shimar heard this, he advanced his own horse and behind him marched Simanbin-Anas-i-Nakai, Khooli bin Yezidi Asbahi and Jameel bin Malik-i-Hajazi. These were again followed by Yezid's full cavalry, with loosened reins and drawn swords. Abbas cried to Husain 'O my master! beware. The cursed forces of Ibn-i-Ziad intend to attack you.' Before any of these could reach Marad, Abbas overtook his victim and with a blow of his lance wounded his hand. The humiliated wretch cried 'Leave me alone, O Abbas! I am your slave.' But Abbas replied 'Such a wicked and cowardly slave will be of no service to me' and struck his lance so forcibly in one of his ears that it came out of the other. Then he fell upon the columns that had gathered to protect the bank of the Euphrates and caused their heads to fall in numbers round him. The cowardly mob, unable to withstand his attacks, fled in disorder and he was soon at the bank of the river wetting and filling the

leathern bag. He raised up a handful of water to his lips to quench his thirst but the idea of his ailing brother and his children made him throw down the water and shed tears with it. He lifted up the leathern bag and hung it on his shoulder. In the meantime, the archers and other soldiers that were running in different directions, came up to prevent Abbas from taking water to the encampment. A severe battle ensued. Abbas met them and was causing destruction among them when an arrow suddenly struck his left eye. Just then, a sword fell upon his arm but Abbas held the leathern bag and cleared his way with his remaining arm. But alas ! another sword severed that arm too. A second arrow struck the leathern bag and with the water, Abbas fell down to the ground. A merciless wretch gave Abbas a blow on the head with his heavy club. Abbas cried to his brother Husain, 'O my master ! Your servant is about to leave the world.' Husain with a desperate effort succeeded in approaching Abbas and asked him to leave a few dying words. Abbas replied 'When I was born, I opened my eyes when you took me in your lap and I first saw your face. Now it is my sincere desire that I may pass away gazing at you. But, as an arrow has pierced one of my eyes and its blood has accumulated in the other, I cannot see you.' Husain cleaned the unhurt eye of Abbas and the latter began staring at Husain and passed away with a deep sigh. This sight shattered the nerves of Husain ; but, with extreme patience, he prayed and said, 'O Lord ! Accept this humble sacrifice of mine.'

Husain's second son, Ali, better known as Ali Akbar, then requested his father to permit him to face the enemy. But he was asked to get the permission of his mother first. The young man was now eighteen years old and commanded great respect and love on account of his handsome and

noble appearance and goodly manners. His knowledge of theology and religious philosophy was only next to that of Husain. He resembled the Prophet in all his features. Whether Hashimite or Omiade, man or woman, whoever once cast a glance on his charming face, he or she became a slave of him. When Ali Akbar succeeded in gaining permission from his mother, Ummi-Laila (a granddaughter of Abu Sufian), Zainub, Husain's sister, who had brought him up from his childhood and respected him for his resemblance to the Prophet, obstructed his way and said, 'It was to save you from falling into the jaws of death that I had given away my two sons to suffer on your behalf. Now, if you want to proceed to the field, bring back my sons and then go to fall a prey to Omiade tyranny.' But Husain, with his usual solemnness and serenity, strode into the tent, caught hold of his son by the hand and said to Zainub, 'Sister! this son of mine is a sacrifice in the path of God; do not stand in his way; leave him alone.' All the ladies, children, slaves and slave girls begged Husain to spare his life. But Husain could not move an inch from his position. The father and the son marched out of the tent amidst an uproar of mourning. The father equipped the son with double armour and a steel helmet. He tied a leathern belt round the son's waist and hung a sword to it. He then helped him in mounting the horse, by holding the stirrup. But the paternal heart melted away at the sight and a stream of tears flowed down his cheeks. He lifted up his hands towards Heaven and said in a pathetic tone. 'Bear witness, O my Lord! I despatch a son, that resembles Thy Prophet most in formation of body, in character and in tone and mode of speaking, to fall into the jaws of death. Whenever we grew restless with a burning desire to see Thy Prophet, we comforted our eyes by casting a glance on this young man.

As this young, chivalrous man marched to the field, the enemy began gazing on him and praised his noble features. Some cried in admiration, 'It seems the Prophet has returned with fresh youth and vigour.' Those who were prevented by the horses from glancing at the face of Ali Akbar got themselves mounted on horses and stood upon the saddles to see the figure that resembled the Prophet most. When this son of Husain found his enemies engaged in gazing at and praising him, he declared, 'I am Ali, son of Husain, son of Ali. By the Kaaba, the House of God, we are your masters through the Prophet. I now intend to destroy you by my sword, assisting the cause of my father. By God, those born of adultery can never rule us.'

The nominal Moslems began attacking this figure of their Prophet, thereby giving proof that, in the height of passion, they would have certainly assaulted and killed the Prophet himself, had he been alive and come there to support the Right. Ali Akbar fought as bravely as a Hashimite resolved to die would; but the scorching sun of the Arabian desert shining mercilessly on the iron of his armour and the heat of his young blood, coupled with the lack of water for four days, created fatigue in his frame and, after severe fighting, he returned to his father and said, 'Father! the heat of the sun has enervated my system and the weight of iron has enfeebled me; can you supply me with a draught of refreshing water, so that I may gain strength to fight your enemies?' These words and his inability to comply with the request melted Husain's heart, who encouraged the son in these words, 'Your grandfather is waiting with a cup of heavenly drink to quench your thirst. Return and prepare for death; may it be wholesome to you.'

The disappointed son returned and made a desperate attack again, making heaps of dead bodies in the enemy's

ranks. But Sinan bin Anas craftily coming behind him drove his lance so forcibly in Ali Akbar's back that its head came out of his chest. Ali's hands loosened the hold of the sword and the reins of the horse and he soon rested his head on the mane of his steed. His feet came out of the stirrups. The faithful horse attempted to flee with its rider to the camp of Husain; but the devilish forces obstructed his way and everyone, whom the horse passed, gave Ali Akbar a blow with whatever weapon he possessed. Pieces of his flesh were strewn here and there and he fell to the ground unconscious.

Just when Ali Akbar received the first wound, he shouted to his father for help. The sound of his son's cry changed Husain. 'Husain had,' writes Hameed bin Muslim, 'in the morning of the 10th of Muharram, an erect body and a black beard. I wondered to find that this Hashimite, though of about sixty years of age, appeared to be much younger than what he was. But I chanced to see him again the same afternoon, after he had heard the call of Ali Akbar for help. His hair appeared to be more grey than black, his back was bent, his face wrinkled and eyes devoid of sight. He was running this side and that side in search of his son; but, when he got tired, he stood on a mound and prayed to God, "O Lord! Take me to my son and let me cast a last glance on his face."' Suddenly, Ali Akbar's horse covered all over with dust and blood came panting and bleeding. It made a loud neigh of terror and grief and guided Husain to the place where Ali was lying in the struggle of death, contracting and relaxing his limbs. Husain fell down upon his son and said, 'My son! just behold this poor old father who has responded to your call under most adverse circumstances.' The son opened his eyes, gazed at his father and said in a low tone, 'Father! I see my grandfather

Muhammad standing near my head and offering me a cup of heavenly drink.' So saying, the son closed his eyes, a spasm shook him, and Ali Akbar lay lifeless in the presence of his father. The trembling arms of Husain attempted to raise the body of his grand looking, pious and learned son to the horse's back ; but no ! hands had no strength, feet had lost their firmness, eyes could not see properly. But Husain turned towards his Creator and imbibed sufficient patience and vigour from the real Fountain of Energy and then succeeded in lifting up the body of his beloved son whose death had deprived him of almost all his faculties.

He was not a stone, nor a wall, but a man with extraordinary sensitiveness and still greater patience and power to forbear. He felt every calamity that befell him and was broken down by its ruinous effects. But he took them all like an ideal man, who is in reality next to God.

He went walking along with the horse on which was tied up the dead body of his son and, when he reached his tent, he again attempted to bring the body down to the ground. Again he found his strength gone. Whom could he now call to assist him in this painful duty ? His brother Abbas, his nephews Qasim, Aun, Muhammad, his other relations and his friends had trodden a path which would never lead them back. In despair he called his own sister Zainub. 'A lady with a grand round face, which shone like the full moon,' writes Hameed bin Muslim, 'and which resembled Ali most came out of the ladies' tent, crying, "O delight of my eyes, joy of my heart !" Two ear-rings were hanging from her ears. With tears in her eyes, she helped Husain and they carried the body of Ali Akbar inside the tent. He then knelt down before God and said "I thank Thee, O My Lord ! for making me successful so far in thy tests. I had a single Ali Akbar,

and him I have given Thee. But had I a hundred sons like him, the life of none would I have spared ”.

Simon Oakley, in his History of the Saracens, quotes the following description of Ali Akbar's martyrdom from Major Price.

‘ Ali Akbhar, the eldest son of Husain (he was really the second son and not the eldest), aspired to the distinction of being the first of his family to lay down his life in defence of his parent. Having announced aloud his name and descent, he rushed into the thickest of the enemy and, animated by the presence of his father, he made ten different assaults, in each of which he sacrificed two or three of his opponents. At last, almost suffocated with heat and thirst, he complained bitterly of his sufferings. His agonised father rose and introducing his own tongue within the parched lips of his favourite son, thus endeavoured to alleviate his sufferings by the only means of which his enemies had not yet been able to deprive him. The gallant youth, then rushed for the last time into the conflict but being wounded from behind, he fell and was cut to pieces in his father's sight. This overwhelming spectacle wrung from Husain his first and only cry ; while his sister threw herself on the mangled remains of her nephew and gave way to the most violent expression of despair and sorrow.’

With the fall of Ali Akbar, Hussain's last defender, the holy encampment was now empty of any male member able to help the Imam, save Imam Zain-ul-abidin, who lay in a lethargic state. The tents that were full of Husain's supporters in the morning, now presented a grievously desolate sight. The encampment that was full of the active movements of soldiers and brisk walk of boys was now reduced to a dreadful silence. Grief and despair prevailed everywhere. The only noise that issued from the tent

was that of the mourning ladies and even that was lost in the heavy sounds of drums, trumpets and trampling of horses in the enemy's columns. Amidst overwhelming troubles and calamities, suffocated as Husain was with grief, he never lost his presence of mind, but went to his sister Zainub and said, 'Sister! bring me some old and torn suit.' When she brought it, he put it on his own body. When the sister asked him why he put on such a dress, he explained, 'I fear the impious soldiers will plunder even my clothes. I hope this good-for-nothing dress will not attract them and my body will not be exposed to the public sight.'

Husain then equipped himself with armour and weapons and went to his ailing son, Zain-ul-abidin; but, finding him unconscious, he handed over a bundle of manuscript sheets wrapped up in a piece of cloth to his daughter Fatima to be given to the son. The manuscript was the sacred inheritance of Prophets and holy Imams, which ought to have been in the custody of the Prophet or Imam of the day and contained various sciences and predictions.

He then stood inside the ladies' tent to bid farewell to them and cried, 'O Zainub, Ummi Kulsum, Fatima, Rugayya, Rubab and Sukaina! my last wishes to you all. Don't dishonour yourselves and me by raising your voices in mourning or by tearing your dress or faces. Bear everything calmly and trust in God.' He found his young daughter Sukaina standing and weeping. He called her and said, 'Do not burn my heart, O Sukaina! with your tears of despair. Greater grief and weeping are awaiting you in the near future. Husain then embraced and kissed her weeping and came out. He got upon his steed and rode in front of the enemy and made a loud appeal to the inhabitants of the earth, saying, 'Is there any that intends.

to defend the Imam? Is there any that will check the foe from reaching the Harem of the Prophet of God?' But no reply was forthcoming. Then he said, 'No! there is none to assist me and none to prevent the mob from harming the holy daughters of the Prophet!'

These appeals had the power of shaking the very foundation of existence. 'The bodies of the martyrs, who had fallen in defending Husain,' write Shaik Jaffar and other writers on the tragedy of Karbala, 'began to tremble and roll on the ground, thereby showing their readiness to stand up again and fight for him. But Husain commanded them to abide in their places, as they had done their duty and that his appeals were intended only for the living.' A second time, Husain made the same pathetic appeal. The sound of his voice vibrated in the ear of his eldest son, who was lying in a delirious state. Things in their right places have marvellous effects. The son at once got up, leaning on his spear, and came out trembling and falling at every step. He cried, 'Father! I am ready to defend you.' But Husain cried to his sister Zainub, 'Sister! hold him fast and do not allow him to face swords and lances lest the earth should be deprived of the progeny of the Prophet.' Zainub held Imam Zain-ul-Abidin by the hand and led him back to the tent.

A third time Husain made his appeal. Husain's youngest son, Ali Asghar, an infant of six months, heard it in his cradle and, with an extraordinary effort, jumped down on the ground and began weeping in a shrill tone. Suddenly, he closed his eyes. His cheeks grew pale. His lips turned blue. The child closed its fists fast and every sign of death was manifest in its face. The sweat of death spread in drops above the eye-brow. Zainub, unable to bear the sight any more, came to the entrance of the tent and cried to her brother in a fit of passion.

Husain returned and was shown the pitiable scene. He lifted up the child in his arms and again mounted his horse. The mother cried in agony, 'Master! where dost thou take my child?' Husain lifted up his eyes towards heaven and cried, 'O Lord! This is the last ruby in my treasures. Him I sacrifice in Thy path.' Husain spread a piece of cloth on his dying infant lest the scorching sun should hasten his end.

The soldiers of Omar began gazing at Husain and at that which he held in his arms. Some said, 'Husain has brought a copy of the Holy Koran to put forward as a refuge and as a plea for sparing his life.' But Husain mounted on an elevated spot and removed the cloth that covered the child. He lifted him up in his arms and appealed to the Satanic forces showing them his infant, 'Of what crime can you accuse this child? You blame me for not acknowledging the sovereignty of Yezid. But, can any law, any religion or any sane brain lay any charge against this infant? This infant of mine is about to die of thirst. His mother has lost her milk through lack of water. Just a few drops to refresh the child! If you think that I am using him as a pretext to get water for myself, I will leave him in your arms. You may quench his thirst and return him to me.' So saying, he commanded the baby, with divine powers that were hidden under his human form, to show the dryness of his tongue. The infant put out his tongue. The tyrannical forces saw the miraculous obedience of the child to his father's order and a chill of timidity benumbed their nerves. Everyone shrank from fighting Husain after this incident. When Omar bin Saad perceived the magic effect of Husain's action, he cried to Hurmula, one of the blackest and most heartless figures in the World's History, to reply. This Hurmula, who had no equal in stone-heartedness, was an

expert bowman. He lifted up his bow and brought out a poisoned arrow from his quiver and, adjusting it in the bow, shot it at the neck of the infant in Husain's arms. Husain saw this flying arrow and protected the child under his arm. But the arrow transfixed both his arm and the child's neck. The delicate nerves could not bear the wound and a sudden fit straightened the child's limbs and bent his head backwards. The afflicted father pulls out the arrow which has pinned his arm to the neck of the infant. The child gazes at the face of the father and passes away with a smile. Husain then holds the blood of his infant in his hand and colours his own face with it. The brutal crowd cries, 'Husain! Have you turned mad that you colour your face with the blood of your child?' 'No,' replies Husain, with extraordinary patience and presence of mind. 'I just carry this to my grandfather to show him what treatment I had at your hands.'

Ashamed to carry the dead body of the infant to his mother and with a view to save the so-called Moslems from the crime of ill-treating a sinless child and having his head mounted (as he feared they would) on a lance, Husain deemed it necessary to have him buried in the field of Karbala. He drew out his sword from the scabbard, dug a grave with it and interred the child with his own hands, after the usual prayers prior to burial.

When this was done, Husain again stood in front of the enemy and called Omar bin Saad to his presence. When he came, Husain said to him, 'You remember, just at the beginning of the battle, I put forward three suggestions for you to choose any one of them. At this stage, I once again remind you of them. (1) Raise your blockade and let me return to my grandfather's grave so that I may lead a peaceful life there.' Omar at once rejected this. Husain continued (2) 'If you intend to fight with me, let

me at least have a draught of water so that I may cool my parched liver.' 'No,' replied Omar, 'not a single drop will be allowed to you.' (3) 'Then,' said Husain, 'I am alone. It is not becoming a soldier to allow thousands to fall on one and cut him to pieces. Let your soldiers fight with me one by one and forbid the crowd to attack me from all sides.' Omar ostensibly accepted this suggestion; but, when he found that no number could stand in succession before the son of the 'Lion of God' in single combats, he suddenly broke his word and ordered a general onslaught on Husain.

Abu Makhnaf writes:—'Just after the burial of Ali Asghar, Husain stood up and said,' "O Lord! Thou witnesseth that this accursed herd intends not to leave a single soul of the Prophet's progeny alive." He then recited the following lines:—

'Know ye! I am the son of Ali of the Hashimite tribe. This is enough greatness for me, if I am to boast at all. My grandfather is the Apostle of God, whose superiority over every living being is confirmed. We are certainly Divine light illuminated to guide the World. Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, is my mother and Jaffar, entitled the one gifted with emerald wings, is my uncle. The Divine Scripture was sent down in our house and it contains injunctions and precepts for the guidance and prosperity of the World. We are a Divine shelter and refuge for the inhabitants of the earth, both in its external and internal meaning. We are the owners of the Fountain of Kousar and through obedience and devotedness to us, people can expect the grant of cups, filled by the Prophet, with the heavenly drink. It is an undenied fact that the thirst of every virtuous being will be quenched by such cup to be presented by Ali. This Ali is a Divine Guide whose obedience and the safeguarding of whose

rights are compulsorily enjoined on the whole of Humanity. Our friends are the greatest gainers and our enemies the worst losers on the 'Day of Resurrection,' 'The Tree of Thooba' will exclusively cast its shade on those that visit our graves. Their residence will be the Central Paradise and they will own spotless, bright souls.'

Just to save the surrounding hounds from committing the blasphemous act of murdering the Imam of the Day, had they only possessed a listening ear, Husain once again addressed to them in a stirring speech. He first enumerated his connections with the holy members of the Hashimite tribe and then said, 'Do ye not remember the words of the Prophet in commendation of us? "Hasan and Husain are the Chiefs of all those that will have to enter paradise." It is my faith and it ought to be your faith also that lying is a sin. Know ye! I have never once uttered a lie. I have never displeased a believer nor have I even once delayed a single prayer. If you disbelieve me, there are still present among you some of the Associates of the Prophet; you can inquire of them if my claims are justified or not and whether they have not heard my commendation from the Prophet himself. By God, if the Donkey on which Jesus rode were alive, the Christians would have fed and respected it till the last day. They would have protected it and would never have disputed as to its greatness. In the same way, the Jews would not have failed to honour and admire any of the relics of Moses, were they to be obtained by them. But alas! What a people you are that you have surrounded the grandson and other relations of your own Prophet and intend to shed their blood wrongfully. You neither fear your God nor your Prophet. In my life, I have never committed a murder, nor have I stolen any thing from its rightful owner. You have no blood-feud claim on me. Then why do you

intend to murder me and how are you justified in shedding my blood ?'

'You know that I had turned my face away from this world and had settled myself on the grave of my grandfather. You did not allow me to stay there. I then proceeded to Mecca, wherein lies the "House of God," and engaged myself in worship and abstinence. There you sent letters to me and tried to convince me that the whole Moslem World was desirous to acknowledge me their only Imam and to follow my footprints in religion. When I responded to your call and came here, you discarded me and proved to be traitors. For this sin and treachery of yours, I will say nothing but repeat the words in which Moses addressed his vicious people, namely, "I seek shelter under One Who is both my Lord and yours, whether you are kind to me or you disbelieve and reject my words." If you leave me alone even at this stage, I should like to settle either at the Kaaba or on the grave of my grandfather, until I finish my natural life in this world and begin the other.'

Husain then waited for a reply. But none of the surrounding thousands had anything to say. Husain then said 'I have done my duty. I have fully laid before you God's arguments. I thank the Lord that you have no argument to lay before me.' He then lifted up his hands towards heaven and prayed, 'O Lord! my life is in distress and Thou art my helper in my troubles. My strength has given way and it is from Thee that I can gain strength. Thou art my Master and Bestower of all the blessings that I have enjoyed. Thou art the goal of desires. Help me, O Thou Most Merciful! and let Thy help suffice me.'

Husain had scarcely finished his prayers when Thameem, son of Qataba, confronted him for a single combat and made a sudden assault, aiming thereby to establish his name

in Arabia as one who defeated and killed the son of 'The Lion of God.' But, before he could harm Husain, an ordinary blow of the latter's sword sent his soul direct to Hell and the body fell down motionless on the ground. A large number of such able-bodied and skilled soldiers, that had been reserved by Omar bin Saad, came in succession to fare Husain and each of them shared the fate of Thameem. When Omar bin Saad noticed his columns getting thinner, he cried in despair, 'Don't you know this is the son of Ali, the greatest wrestler who did not leave a single Arabian champion undefeated? He will never be defeated in single combat. Surround him from all sides and unsaddle him with your combined attacks.' The order created a tidal motion in the ocean-like forces of Omar. The cavalry made a move from one side and the infantry from the other. The lancers and bowmen advanced with their lances and bows, respectively, ready for action. Those that had no weapons provided themselves with lathies and some with the stones that they could gather from the ground. But, heedless of the huge number of murderers and their readiness to accomplish their unholy design, Husain sat up on his saddle with complete presence of mind and recited again a few lines, the translation of which runs as follows:—

'Our nation has gone astray from the Divine path and has preferred infidelity. It murdered Ali and Hasan, who were both born of revered parents and had inherited virtue from them. You have now assembled here to fight with Husain and thus to give proof of your old jealousies and hidden animosity. You have gathered the meanest individuals to attack the noble inhabitants of the Sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina. Each one of you advises the other to ruin us, simply to please two heretics. You are not afraid of God while attempting to shed our blood,

with a view to satisfy the born infidel Obaidullah, son of Ziad. With showers of arrows you try to crush me so as to make Omar bin Saad succeed in his intentions. There is none in the world who can justly be so proud of his birth as myself. I am the son of the best parents. Whose grandfather can challenge mine in virtue and greatness? My father has defeated the worst infidels in the battle of Badr and Hunain. He worshipped the One True God in his young days, while the whole of Arabia was blinded with idolatry and the Quraishis were bowing down before 'Lath and Uzza,' two chief idols of Mecca. The heavy charges of my father scattered away the enemies of the Prophet that had gathered to fight with him in the famous battle of Khanduqh and, at the conquest of Mecca, while the Quraishis were still at war with him. How harshly has this nation handled the children of the Prophet that are in reality a pride to both their father and grandfather?'

Husain then unsheathed his sword and rushed against the thickest columns, crying, 'It is more pleasant to be murdered than to be disgraced and to be disgraced than to enter Hell and suffer Divine wrath.' His attacks were so heavy and irresistible that the enemy scattered like chaff before him. His sword destroyed the multitude just as a flash of lightning reduces a heap of corn to ashes.

Husain's attacks were characterised by inconceivable spirit and, in the height of his zeal, he was repeating these lines: 'I am Husain, son of Ali. Would you not praise me even now? I am firm on the path of my father and I will rise up again to revive the laws of my grandfather.'

Abdulla, son of Imad, who was present among the soldiers of Omar bin Saad, states: 'None, bereaved of his sons and all his friends and with a family about to be captured, have I seen fighting with so much energy and resolution as Husain.'

Tibri described Husain's fighting in the following way:—

'The forces attacked Husain from right and left simultaneously. Husain first turned towards the right and scattered them all with his heavy charges. Then he fell upon those that had assembled on his left and crushed them severely.'

One present on the field of Karbala states: 'I have never, before or after this incident, seen one wounded, alone, heart-broken with grief and bereaved of sons, relations and friends, making such a resolute dash with full presence of mind and charging the enemy with such courage and vehemence as Husain. When the infantry attacked him, he repulsed them with great vigour and with wonderful agility of movement he protected his body from the flying arrows. Whenever he found a gap among the horsemen, he rushed in and mowed down as many as he could with the words: 'You have assembled to murder me, which, by God, you will certainly do. You cannot kill any of God's creatures whose blood will bring down on you such a severe Divine wrath as my murder will. God will certainly disgrace you and will establish my greatness. He will revenge my blood and you will be crushed by perplexity and confusion. If you kill me, your energies will be turned against yourselves and you will be annihilated. There will be no end to bloodshed and, in addition to this, a painful punishment will await you.'

Abu Ishaq-i-Asfaraini, a Sunni Historian of an early date, writes 'Husain, with his irresistible attacks, found himself in the midst of the enemy's forces and, with a loud roar like that of a lion, mowed down a large number, just as a harvest-man cuts down his field. Sometimes he attacked on his right side and sometimes on his left, sometimes on the front and sometimes on the back. Many

were trampled and killed under the hoofs of his horse and a river of blood flowed on the ground.'

Husain then returned to his own tent with a body bleeding and full of wounds. The ladies and children assembled round him and gave vent to the most violent expression of despair and sorrow. Husain advised the ladies to prepare themselves to suffer hardships, as their turn had come and reminded them of the promise of the Almighty to save all virtuous people. He said God would help them, arrest their oppressors and inflict on the enemies the worst punishment.

Husain once again made a rush on the cowardly mob, dispersed them vehemently and reached the river bank for a drink. He put the horse into the water to quench its thirst. But the faithful horse turned its head away and refused to taste the water until Husain had drunk. Husain took a handful of water to show the horse that he was going to drink. But a sudden dart wounded his mouth and the blood changed the colour of the water in his hands. He threw it away and said, 'Destiny has stopped my share of water in this world. I must wait until I get a cup of heavenly drink from my grandfather's hands.'

'Husain then asked the crowd at least to state on what grounds they wished to handle him so brutally. Some of the tyrants replied 'This is all in retaliation for what our ancestors suffered at the hands of your father, Ali, in the battles of Badr, Ohad, Hunain and Khanduqh.'

Suddenly, Omar bin Saad ordered his soldiers to attack Husain's tents that contained his ladies and a single son seriously ill and unable to move. Husain cried with intense grief and fury, 'O supporters of the Omiades! how mean it is on your part to attack innocent ladies! I am still alive. Engage yourself with me and leave the ladies alone.' He dispersed the timid herd that had intervened

between himself and the tents and once again approached his own encampment. His body was full of wounds and blood was flowing out of them. Still none dared confront him and he was even then firm on his saddle. But, suddenly, an arrow struck his forehead; he pulled it out and was just wiping off the blood that had turned his face red and was addressing God in these words: 'Thou witnesseth how these sinners treat Thy Servant,' when another dart pierced the middle of his chest. This made him tremble all over his body and the loss of blood compelled him to loosen his hold on the saddle. He said, 'In the name of the Lord, with His assistance and, in accordance with the laws of the Prophet. . . .'

He lifted up his hands that were full of blood and prayed, 'Thou knowest, O Lord! These people kill one except whom there is none on earth who can claim to be the son of the Apostle of God.' He pulled out the dart and a stream of blood began to flow. He held the blood in his hand and once again coloured his face with it and said, 'With this face I shall see my grandfather, the Prophet, and shall enumerate before him the names of my murderers.' He now began to faint. Saleh, son of Waheb-i-Mazany, who was waiting for the opportunity, now came up and struck Husain's side with his heavy club. This brought down to the ground one who had been nursed by Fatima, had played on the bosom of the Prophet and had ridden on his shoulders. Zainub, who was beholding all this with a burning heart, came out of the tent crying, 'O my brother, O my master! Why does not the sky fall down to the ground? Why do not the hills shatter?' Omar bin Saad was standing at some distance from Husain, holding on his head an umbrella woven with threads of silver and gold. She said to him. 'Thou art a Quraishi and thou still witnesseth my brother being slaughtered.'

His tears flowed down his beard and he turned away his face from her.

At this stage, a young boy of about ten years, fair in complexion and bearing a noble appearance, came out of Husain's tent. Zainub tried to stop him going to the field and Husain too cried to his sister to prevent the boy from approaching him. But the boy, with a desperate struggle, rescued himself from Zainub's hands and ran to Husain crying, 'Uncle! who has reduced you to this state that you are lying on the ground with a body full of arrows and wounds of swords and lances?' This was Abdulla, son of Hasan that came out to save his afflicted uncle. With the above words, he tried to embrace Husain and said, 'By God, I will not part from my uncle.' One Abhar bin Kaab raised his sword to give Husain a severe blow on the head. But the boy lifted up his hands to save him and threatened the assaulter, saying, 'O son of an immoral mother! How dare you kill my uncle?' But the heartless brute brought down his sword on the hands of the boy severing both of them. Husain embraced his dying nephew and said, 'O my brother's son! be patient. Suffer calmly what has befallen thee. Think thou that all this is for thy good. Thou wilt shortly join thy pious ancestors.'

The notorious Hurmala sent an arrow which killed Abdulla, son of Hasan, in the arms of Husain.

Now it was time for Asar prayers. Husain struck his bleeding palms on the soil of the desert and performed his ablution with it instead of with water; then he turned towards the Kaaba and began his prayers, sitting. After he had finished them, he collected the sand of the desert. On it, he placed his right cheek and thrice he cried, 'O Allah! O my Preserver! O my Master!' He felt an unbearably burning sensation in the bleeding cheek. He raised it up and placed the other on the heap of sand and

uttered thrice the same words, 'O Allah ! O my Preserver ! O my Master !' Again the burning sand created an irritation in the left cheek. He lifted it up and placed his bleeding forehead on the heap and addressed the Lord in the same way. After a short pause, he began to repeat the name of the Lord several times and was engaged in deep meditation, when the command of Shimar to burn the tents of the ladies awoke him. The heap of sand had melted away with the stream of blood that was flowing from Husain's wounds. The order to destroy the ladies' tents made him shudder inwardly and excited him to stand up and cry 'You have no shame and you wish to treat innocent ladies in a brutal manner. Come and get yourselves engaged with me as I am still alive.' Shimar ordered the soldiers to surround Husain and bring him down by giving repeated blows of their whips. Husain once again lay prostrate on the ground, after being whipped by a number of those merciless brutes. One Malik bin Bashir al Kandi approached him and gave him a blow with his sword. Husain opened his eyes and said, 'May God keep you thirsty on the Last Day and count you among the oppressors.' Shimar now cried, 'Why should you delay in giving a finishing stroke to this man who is almost dead?' Zira bin Shareek, hearing this, came near the Imam and struck him with his sword. Moving on his knees, Husain gave him a counter blow which left him lifeless on the ground. Husain then said, 'O Lord ! I bear Thy Destiny patiently. There is no God except Thee.' Haseen bin Nameer then transfixed Husain's mouth with a dart. Abu Ayoob-i-Ghanavi pierced his throat with an arrow. Nasir bin Kharasha gave him a blow with his sword and Saleh bin Wahab-i-Mazany struck him with a lance. But the two blows that were dealt by Sinan bin Anas, one with a spear and the other with an

arrow, were so severe that Husain was never afterwards able to sit up.

For fear of being criticised for presenting an exaggerated account of Husain's murder, we translate below the description of Abu Makhnaf, a historian that was present on the field of Karbala and noted down in history of which he was an eyewitness, the facts which cannot be denied, if we have the least possible faith in the present histories.

'First Shees bin Rabai issued from the ranks of Omar bin Saad, to behead Husain. But, as soon as he gazed at the face of the Imam, he threw down his sword and ran away with a nervous shivering. Sinan bin Anas advanced towards Shees and asked him why he threw down the sword and returned without accomplishing the task he had undertaken. But he replied, 'Husain's eyes fully resembled those of the Prophet. The sight intimidated me and I had to run away.' Sinan said, 'I will accomplish what has been an impossibility for you.' Sinan approached Husain. The latter opened his eyes. When they gazed at each other, Sinan began to tremble and his sword fell down of its own accord and he ran away in terror. Shimar met him and asked him the reason of his failure to behead Husain. Sinan replied, 'Husain's face reminded me of Ali's countenance in all its features and a mere look made me shudder and tremble.' Shimar replied, 'You are all still raw soldiers and it is I and I alone that can fully accomplish this task.' So saying, he approached Husain and got upon his chest. Husain opened his eyes and asked the brutal wretch to state his name. The accursed fellow replied he was Shimar, son of Zil-joushan. Husain asked him again the name of the person whom he intended to behead. Shimar said, 'You are Husain, son of Ali and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, and you are Hasan's brother.' 'When you know all this,' retorted

Husain, 'why do you intend to murder me?' 'For the reward,' replied the other, 'that Yezid has promised to grant your murderer.' 'Is the salvation through my grandfather dearer to you,' asked Husain, 'or the reward of Yezid?' The shameless fellow at once replied, 'The reward of Yezid.' Husain then asked him to remove the cloth that covered his inner body and to show him his chest. Shimar did as he was told. Husain observed white spots of leprosy on his chest and his tough hair that resembled that of a boar and said 'True, true has been the prediction of my grandfather revealed to my father Ali.' 'What was the prediction?' asked Shimar. Husain repeated the words of Muhammad, the Prophet, viz., 'O Ali! the murderer of your son Husain will be a spotted cur with hair resembling that of a boar.' Shimar said, 'You compare me with a dog; in return, I will behead you from behind.' So saying, he turned Husain round and put him on his face and severed his head, while Husain was all the while saying 'O my grandfather Muhammad! O my father Ali! and my mother Fatima! I am being beheaded thirsty, oppressed and in a foreign land.' Shimar after committing this most sacrilegious act, cried, 'Allah Oh Akbar!' and the sound echoed from the lips of every soldier of Yezid. Suddenly, the shocks of an earthquake shook all those that were present on the field of Karbala. A darkness prevailed and drops of blood began to rain. A sound from heaven was heard, 'By God, an Imam, son of an Imam, has been killed. A gallant lion has been slaughtered. The protector of the widows and the orphans has been butchered.' This occurred on Friday the 10th of Muharram, in the year 61 A. H.'

So far has been the almost literal translation of what Abu Makhnaf noted down in his History. Abu Ishaq-i-Asfaraini has also narrated the same facts, with some additions.

thereto. But the description of Major Price, as copied down by Oakley, is very appealing and pathetic. He writes:

‘An arrow having transfixd his horse, the unfortunate Husain came to the ground and was left fainting with thirst and fatigue to contend alone and on foot against a remorseless multitude. The hour of prayer between noon and sunset had arrived and the devoted Imam began his religious duties. Whilst thus engaged, several of the enemy drew near, but, impressed with a sentiment of awe at his appearance, successively retired. His child Abdulla was killed in his arms and, having repeated the passing formula for the spirit of his slaughtered infant, he implored his Creator to grant him patience under these accumulated afflictions. At length, almost exhausted by thirst, he directed his languid step towards the Euphrates; but the enemy, with loud vociferations, endeavoured to frustrate his intentions. Husain, however, was beginning to taste the luxury of the refreshing element when an arrow pierced his mouth. Rejecting the now ensanguined draught, Husain indignantly arose and having extracted the winged mischief, he withdrew to the entrance of the tents and there took his last stand, his mouth streaming with blood. His adversaries now closed round the person of the devoted Imam, who, notwithstanding, continued to defend himself with such admirable intrepidity and presence of mind as to excite the surprise and terror of his assailants and kill or disable not a few of their number. Labouring under such extreme anguish of mind from the appalling spectacle of a murdered family, covered with wounds, deprived of water for so many days and assailed by such multitudinous odds as well as by distress and horror in every shape and form, he exhibited such an example of courage and constancy as seemed to be beyond the scope of human prowess. Wounded in four and thirty

places, by different weapons, extremely weakened through loss of blood and fainting with intolerable heat and thirst, he still opposed an invincible resistance to the assaults which were directed against his person from every side. Reduced to this extremity, he was at last approached by seven of the enemy, one of whom drawing near to assail him found a fatal opportunity and struck off one of his arms close to the shoulder. He now fell : but, by a kind of convulsive effort, he sprung once more to his feet and endeavoured to make at the enemy ; but again sinking to earth, the soldier approached from behind and thrust him through the back with a javelin till the point came out at the breast ; then, withdrawing the fatal weapon, the soul of Husain fled through the orifice. His head was struck off and his body was exposed by his murderers whilst several of the barbarous conquerors proceeded to pillage the tents and stripped the women of their head-dresses and wearing apparel.'

In this brutal way, was this Godly Soul, whose only faults were his unmingled devotion to his Creator, his firmness of faith in God, his sincere desire to support and defend moral and social principles inculcated by God and His Prophet and his refusal to acknowledge the sovereignty of an atheistic rake, ruthlessly butchered by a devil and his Satanic forces. Husain suffered a physical defeat but gained a moral victory. Yezid, with all the power at his disposal, could not make him yield. Husain's body was destroyed, cut to pieces and trampled under hoofs of horses ; but his unshaken faith in the existence of the Lord and in the truth of his grandfather's message and his unwavering conviction of a future life have remained, have spread far and wide and have conquered the world. There is no rational being that does not praise him for his labours in emancipating humanity from the bonds that

physical supremacy and cunning diplomacy put on learning and virtue. Husain lost a territorial monarchy but acquired an undisputed rule over all sane mentality. Yezid tried to annihilate Husain; but he was himself annihilated. Husain is living still in the hearts of his lovers; and who will not love him? Yezid is dead in the real sense; for there is none who does not hate him. Husain's progeny has spread with such leaps and bounds that there is not a single village or locality containing Muhammadan population where there is not a Saiyid or a descendant of Husain at present. Some even wrongfully assume the title of Saiyid, thinking that they can gain some honour by such assumption of the title. None at present claims to be a son of that foul-hearted Yezid; and if any such exists, he denies it for fear of being dishonoured simply by being connected with that infamous oppressor.

Thus Yezid failed in his attempts with all the treasury and regiments at his command. Husain has really won, though penniless and unsupported and though he was a target of all worldly misfortunes, before his soul passed away. He has left a world of lessons of supporting unshrinkingly the Divine Religion, Truth, Liberty of thought and deed and Virtue in its every shape and form, under the most adverse and pressing circumstances that a man can think of. He upheld the Laws of Humanity with such zeal, vigour and self-abnegation that other Nations too ought to celebrate his Martyrdom, in the month of Muharram, with as much enthusiasm and sympathy as the Muslims themselves. I hope the whole of Humanity will join with me in requesting the Lord to send down upon the soul of Husain and his valiant and pious supporters unbounded blessings and on his arch-rebel Yezid, son of Moawiah, and his accomplices an unlimited and ever-increasing curse.

CHAPTER XIII

MISFORTUNES OF HUSAIN'S FAMILY

HAD the battle of Karbala been a fight for the acquisition of territory and had the myriads that were sent by the inhuman monarch and his brutal governor fought with Husain for the political supremacy of Yezid, there would have been an end to the display of this animosity and savagery with the atrocious murder of Husain. But their devilish nature, their inborn hatred of godliness and virtue and their brutal temper, ever ready to oppress the innocent and persecute the meek, did not permit them to stop their tyranny but led them to commit still worse crimes. Just to obey, to the very letter, the orders of the pitiless governor of Kufa, Omar ordered ten of his horsemen to have their steeds newly shod and commanded them to trample over Husain's body several times, to and fro, with the result that the ribs were smashed to pieces and bits of flesh were strewn here and there on the sand.

The severed heads of the martyrs were mounted on the lances, But, as the body of Ali Asghar, Husain's infant, was missing, a lancer was ordered to make a search. He came near the place where he expected Husain to have buried his son and began to find out the exact spot by examining, with the aid of his lance, the softness of the soil. In one place, the lance pierced deeper than it did anywhere before. He pressed it still further into the ground; but, alas! when he pulled it out, the body of the infant came out with it. Even his head was severed and mounted on a lance, where it shone like a star among the heads of the grown-up martyrs.

Next, the tyrants turned towards the tents which they pillaged and stripped the ladies of their apparel and head-

coverings. Imam Zain-ul-abidin was lying on a skin. They threw him off and carried away the skin. They then set fire to the tents; the ladies and children began to run about in confusion, for fear of being burnt alive. Zainub, with perfect presence of mind, collected them all at a certain spot in the open air and, assisted by some of her unfortunate lady associates, she brought her ailing nephew there with a great effort.

Some of the enemy went to the dead bodies to steal away what they could find on them. Yahya bin Kaab carried away Husain's garment (undercoat), Ashas bin Qees his shirt and a member of the Wahbia Tribe ran away with his sword. 'The horse of Husain,' says Abdulla bin Abbas, 'as I have heard from those present on the field of Karbala, was frantically wandering here and there after the brutal murder of its master and, with a thundering neigh, searched for the body of Husain. When it was found, the horse coloured its forehead with the blood of his neck and began to dash sometimes its own head and sometimes its fore-feet on the ground with extreme grief and despair. When Omar bin Saad saw this, he ordered his men to catch it. But the horse killed several of them by its kicks.' Like one rendered mad, it ran away to the family of the martyrs. When Zainub, Ummi Kulsoom, Sukaina and others saw the horse with no rider on it and the saddle inverted, they gave vent to an expression of the most violent mourning.

The unfortunate family of Husain spent the night and the following day on the open plain of Karbala, surrounded by the brutal forces. On the third day, they were mounted on the bare backs of camels and taken towards Kufa. The enemy had buried the bodies of their own soldiers killed in the conflict and left those of Husain and his brave supporters un-interred. When the family of the

murdered Imam passed by the bodies exposed to such ignominy, the only surviving son of Husain gazed at the scene and was about to faint and succumb to death, when Zainub inspired life into him with these words, 'My nephew! This has been the decree of the Almighty accepted by your father. Let not your soul be afflicted with the pitiable spectacle.'

Abu Makhnaf writes: 'I was present in Kufa when the pillaged family of Husain reached there. Imam Zain-ul-abidin was seated on the bare back of a camel bound in chains. His thighs were bleeding and he was saying, 'O cursed people! May not the Lord moisten your soil with showers! You have not paid any regard to our grandfather, the Prophet. What reply can you give if we and the Prophet jointly question you on the Day of Reckoning? You carry us on camels without either litters or saddle cloths on them. You treat us like ordinary people as if we are not the Founders of Religion. O Omiades! what does your silence mean at our distress and hardship? Why do you not reply to our cries? Out of joy, you clap your hands behind us and you tease us on the way. May you be destroyed! Was not our grandfather, the Prophet, who saved the world from falling into the pit of ignorance?'

'The Kufian ladies,' continues Abu Makhnaf, 'distributed three walnuts and an equal number of dates to each of the children among the Prophet's family. But Umme Kulsoom, Husain's younger sister, snatched them from the hands of the children and threw them away, saying that the Prophet's family had been forbidden to accept alms. The Kufian ladies raised a chorus of mourning when they heard that the Prophet's family was so roughly handled. Umme Kulsoom then said, 'Your males destroy us and you ladies weep over our misfortunes. The excesses of

these people have passed all limits and their crimes have reached so far as to bring down Heaven to Earth and smash mountains to pieces.' Umami Kulsoom had not finished the last sentence when a sudden noise interrupted her. She soon noticed a crowd with the head of her brother in the middle accompanied by the heads of eighteen other martyrs who were related to Husain. This moved Umami Kulsoom to tears and in a passion of grief and anger she cried, 'What answer can you give when the Prophet questions you on the maltreatment of his family after his demise? Had he told you to ill-treat his family in compensation for his labours to train you from being a set of nomads to being a civilised nation? I fear the wrath of God may come down on you as it came upon the previous nations.'

Sahli Saidi, an Associate of the Prophet, says: 'This year I had been to Mecca for the pilgrimage and, when I returned to Kufa, I found the people to have struck work. The shops were all closed. Some were weeping and some laughing. I went to one of them and asked him the cause of the conflicting agitation prevailing all over the country. He took me to a remote corner and explained what had taken place at Karbala. Suddenly, the sound of a bugle distracted my attention from his words and I noticed a number of flags waving, accompanied by military columns, hooting and sounding their drums heavily. The head of Husain, that was mounted on a lofty lance, caught my sight. It was extraordinarily beautiful and shone like a luminous body and was repeating some Koranic verses. The sight created an awe in me and a suffocating grief rendered me speechless. I was gazing at it steadily, my eyes streaming with tears.'

The heads and the captives were then taken to the palace of Obeidulla bin Ziad. When Imam Zain-ul-abidin wit-

nessed the son of Ziad seated arrogantly on his richly decorated chair, the Imam rebuked him, saying, 'Shortly yourselves and ourselves will stand before God and He will question you and us, as regards your actions and our actions in this world. Are you prepared to answer those questions?' The governor said nothing, but looked towards the ladies and asked which of them was Ummi Kulsoom. When he got no reply, he again said, 'For the sake of your grandfather, please speak to me.'

Ummi Kulsoom asked him what he wanted. He said, 'You have all been liars and your grandfather was a liar too. God has humiliated you and has left you to my mercy.' 'O enemy of God!, O illegitimate son!' retorted Ummi Kulsoom, 'a liar is a sinner. It is the sin that really disgraces a man and thou art only too fit to be called a sinner. Wait thou for the eternal fire burning incessantly for thee.' Obeidulla replied, 'You make mention of the fire of Hell. But I have cooled my soul by persecuting you all.' 'Yes,' replied Husain's sister, 'you have shed the blood of the most sacred and pious servants of God, namely, the Ahlul-Baith of the Prophet.' Obeidulla was about to order his soldiers to behead Ummi Kulsoom; but one of his friends advised him not to be irritated by her cutting replies, as she was only a woman.

Zainub, who was sitting without a head-covering and was hiding her face with the hair of her head and the sleeves of her jacket, now repeated a few lines, the translation of which is given below:

Damned be your mothers! You have butchered my brother in a helpless state. In return, you will certainly obtain a fire ever flaming. God is a witness to the facts that you killed my brother, thought it allowable to treat his family with disrespect and robbed them of all their property. You have shed the blood, which you were

prohibited to do by the Korán and by the Prophet. You have taken his family out without head-coverings to hide the faces of its members. How hard it is for me, for my mother, father and grandfather that we should stand here bound in chains and to see the head of my beloved brother mounted on a lance !'

Obeidulla asked of his soldiers who recited those heart-rending lines. When he learnt that it was Zainub, he asked her to speak to him, for the sake of her grandfather, the Prophet. She said, 'What more do you want? You have disgraced us in the presence of all the people, good and wicked.' He said 'Did you see how God treated your brother who wanted to snatch away the Caliphate from Yezid's hands? His hopes were frustrated and God had left him under my control.' 'O son of Marjana !' replied Zainub, 'If at all my brother wanted the Caliphate, it was an inheritance of his grandfather. But, think of thyself and consider the day on which God will be the Judge and the Prophet the complainant and Hell will be thy Penitentiary.' 'O daughter of the brave soldier and orator Ali !' said the governor with shame, 'you are courageous enough to argue with me.' 'Courage,' replied Zainub, 'is no qualification for a lady ; but I know how to talk.' At this stage, Imam Zain-ul-abidin interfered and said to Ibni-Ziad, 'O son of mean birth ! how long will you behave with such incivility to my aunt?' The governor got angry at this interference and ordered one of his men to behead the Imam, who smiled at this order and said, 'You threaten me with death. Do you not yet know that we have practised death and that martyrdom is our glory?' But Zainub at once caught hold of her nephew and said, 'O son of Ziad ! except this one we have no other male member in our family. Do not deprive us of this only son.'

It is strange that a stone-hearted fellow like Ibni-Ziad melted away at this appeal of Zainub and abandoned the idea of beheading Imam Zain-ul-abidin. It was all the work of the Almighty Who controls all Destinies and can save His obedient servant and preserve him to live on earth, as the representative of His Image on earth. The analogy of this can only be found in the Old Testament in the case of Moses. Moses was brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, the greatest enemy of the Israelites, and his only intention was to efface from the earth all the descendants of Jacob and to deprive it of all godly creatures, as he thought their existence a bar against the unholy belief of his divinity.

Simon Oakley records the following incidents connected with the head of Husain :—

Haula (Khooli) who had his head went away post with it to Obeidulla, but, finding the castle shut, he carried it home to his house and told his wife that he had brought her the rarity of the world. The woman was in a rage and said, ' Other men make presents of gold and silver and you have brought the head of the son of the Prophet's daughter. By God, the same bed shall never hold us two any more ' and she immediately leaped out of bed and ran away. He, however, soon procured another of his country-woman to supply her place, who afterwards reported that she was not able to sleep all that night, because of a light which she saw streaming up towards Heaven from the place where Husain's head lay and white birds continually hovering about it. Haula (Khooli) the next morning carried the head to Obeidulla, who treated it with great indignity and even struck it over the mouth with a stick; upon which Zaid, the son of Arqom, said to him, ' Cease striking with the stick for I swear by Him, besides Whom there is no other God, I have seen the lips

of the Apostle of God (Peace be upon him) upon these lips.' Obeidulla angrily replied that if he was not an old man and out of his wits he would strike his head off.'

'The next morning,' writes Abu Makhnaf, 'Zaid's son convened a large gathering in the Jamma-i-Mosque of Kufa and getting himself mounted on a pulpit began to abuse Ali, Hasan and Husain. Upon this, an aged man, blind of both the eyes, named Abdulla, son of Afeef-Azadi, got up in a rage and rebuked him, saying, 'Silence! may God crush your mouth, curse your forefathers and punish and disgrace you! Do you lightly value the murder of Husain? How dare you abuse him and his relations? I have heard the Prophet say 'One that abused Ali had abused me and one that abused me abused the Lord. Hell is the destination of such a culprit.'

When Ibni-Ziad heard this, he at once ordered him to be executed. But his tribesmen jointly took him away and saved his life for the moment. But, when the day went by and the dusk of the evening spread all round the Earth, Obeidulla ordered Khooli to take five hundred horsemen, to proceed with them to the residence of Abdulla bin Afeef and to sever his head. Soon, the home of Abdulla was surrounded by Obeidulla's cavalry. Abdulla had a young daughter, who got startled on hearing the neighing and tramping of horses and informed her father of the coming mischief. Abdulla stood up in a safe corner of house and unsheathing his sword asked his daughter to inform him from which side the enemy were making at him. In this way he cut down a number of them, but was at last captured, bound in chains and taken to the presence of Obeidulla bin Ziad. The governor at once insulted him, saying, 'God has rightly blinded your eyes.' Abdulla immediately replied, 'God

has kept your physical eyes open but has blinded your inner eyes. I thank the Lord for the right understanding he has given me in spite of my inability to see.' 'May the Lord,' replied Obeidulla, 'destroy me if I do not destroy you.' At this last sentence, Abdulla burst into laughter and said, 'When I lost my eyes in the battle of Suffin, I had made supplication to my Lord, requesting Him to grant me the glory of martyrdom at the hands of the worst of his creatures. I find none as vicious as yourself and it is my sincere desire to suffer death at your hands.' Then he recited a few lines praising Husain and his family and cursing the Omiades. Obeidulla prevented him from going on and ordered the executioner to behead him at once, lest there should be an attack on the Government House in consequence of his mutinous speech. His head was also mounted on a lance and people roamed about the streets with it, to deter the inhabitants from following the example of Abdulla bin Afeef and from revolting against the governor or the monarch.

Husain's head was set up in Kufa, but a threatening revolution compelled Obeidulla to send it as early as possible to Yezid. Khooli was ordered to take the heads of the martyrs and the captives to Damascus under an escort of a thousand and five hundred horsemen. Khooli started for the capital of Yezid and proceeded via Mosul. But, wherever the heads were carried, thousands of people, males and females, adults and children, greeted them with loud mournings. Imam Zain-ul-abidin and his aunts Zainub and Kulsoom delivered speeches at every station they met Moslem gatherings, excited the onlookers to bitter weeping and loud cries of grief.

As it is beyond our province to deal with this subject more elaborately, we quote only one or two incidents out of several that occurred on the way.

When the heads reached the borders of Seebore an old, revered gentleman of the place collected his countrymen and addressed them, saying, 'This is the head of Husain whom these accursed people have killed. By God, they ought not to pass through our land.' Upon this, the noblemen and officers of Yezid replied, 'Let us not create any mischief. These heads have passed through many towns and villages. Let them go past our place also.' But the young men admired the first address and rejected the words of the nobles and officers. Clad in armour and well equipped with weapons, they obstructed the way of Yezid's cavalry carrying Husain's head. Just at the bridge leading to the town, the two parties met and a severe skirmish ensued. No less than six hundred of Yezid's men were slain in the conflict. Khooli was forced to take another route, abandoning his idea of passing through Seebore. When Ummi Kulsoom noticed that a number of young men of the place were fighting for her brother's cause, she prayed for them, saying, 'O Lord! make the springs of this place supply fresh water and the foodstuffs cheap and safeguard Seebore from tyrants.'

At another place, an old man leaning on his stick came trudging along near the captives and said, 'Thank God, for the success He has granted to Islam and its Caliph over you heretics.' Imam Zain-ul-abidin noted from his words a love and sympathy towards Islam but an ignorance of what had really taken place and asked the old man if he had read the Koran. 'Strange!' replied the old man 'a heretic asks a Moslem if he has gone through the Religious Book. Why? several times I have read the whole of it' 'Did you recite,' asked the Imam again, 'the verse indicating the purity and infallibility of the Ahlul-Baith, viz., 'O Ahlul-Baith! God only intends to keep away all impurity from you and purify you in the real sense of

the word.' 'Yes,' promptly replied the other. 'Tell me' asked the Imam once more, 'whether you have met with the verse addressing the Prophet.' 'Say thou unto the people that thou dost not ask any reward or remuneration for thy labours, but a sincere devotion to the relations.' The old man admitted the verse to be Koranic with great astonishment. 'We are the Ahlul-Baith and the relations of the Prophet,' continued the Imam, 'whose sanctity has been established by the Koran and obedience to whom is enjoined on you all.' 'By God, tell me,' asked the aged gentleman, 'are you really those people whose praise is contained in the Religious Book?' 'By God,' replied the Imam, 'We are the same people.' On hearing this, the old man could not control himself and, with a deep sigh and eyes full of tears, he cried to the forces of Yezid, 'You infidels have slain the family of the Prophet and roam about with the heads mounted on lances' and began to attack them in a religious excitement. Khooli shouted to his men to finish this old man off, as he scented a great disturbance, if the man were to survive and set up large gatherings by his inflammatory words. The pious old man was killed on the spot and the escort with the heads and captives proceeded further towards the capital, Damascus.

Mr. Taylor, in his book *Muhammadanism* records a curious tradition respecting Husain's head under the authority of Imam Ismail. He writes:

'When Husain's head was sent to be presented to Yezid, the escort that guarded it, halting for the night in the City of Norwil, placed it in a box, which they locked up in a temple. One of the sentinels, in the midst of the night, looking through a chink in one of the doors, saw a man of immense stature with a white and venerable beard, taking Husain's head out of the box, kissing it affectionately and weeping over it. Soon after, a crowd of vener-

able sages arrived, each of whom kissed the pallid lips and wept bitterly. Fearing that these people might convey the head away, the sentinel unlocked the door and entered. Immediately, one of their number came up, gave him a violent slap on the face and said, 'The Prophets have come to pay a mourning visit to the head of this martyr; whither dost thou venture so disrespectfully?' The blow left a black mark on his cheek. In the morning, he related the circumstances to the commander of the escort and showed his cheeks on which the impressions of the hand and fingers were plainly perceptible.'

Sahl, to whose faithfulness to the family of the Prophet we have already adverted, did not wish to retire to his house from Kufa, after witnessing the heads of those saintly personages carried with such indignity and disrespect, but prepared to go along to Damascus with the captives. He was present in the crowd of spectators when the escort carried the heads into Damascus through its gates known as Khaizran. Shimar had the lance with the head of Husain on. Shal says that Shimar was reciting the following lines at his entry into the city :—

'I hold a lengthy lance and profess the true religion. I have murdered the son of the vicerent of the greatest Prophet and have brought his head to present it to Yezid, the lord of the faithful.'

'When Ummi Kulsoom,' continues Sahl, 'heard Shimar lavishly and unjustly praising himself, she got much irritated and rebuked him, saying, 'O accursed and son of one accursed! you are saying nothing but lies. Beware! God will shortly punish the oppressors. You have no shame to boast before the vicious Yezid of murdering one, whose name decorates the Throne of God, whose cradle was swung by Angels, whose grandfather was Muhammad the Prophet and whose father had slaughtered infidels.'

Alas for the day when there is neither our grandfather nor our parents!' On this Khooli came near Ummi Kulsoom and said, 'You are the daughter of a valiant hero, Ali, and hence even this miserable state does not change your temper but keeps you still brave and courageous.'

'After the head of Husain was taken into the city, the heads of Hur, Abbas and Aun followed. The head of Abbas was held up by Qaskham-i-Jafi and that of Aun by Sinan bin Anas-i-Nakhai. These heads were again followed by several other heads whom I could not recognise. Then I witnessed a lady of spare build seated on the bare back of a camel who was all the while repeating these words, with extreme grief and sorrow.' Alas! O my grandfather Muhammad! Alas! O my father Ali! O Husain, Akheel and Abbas! Alas! for your long journey (to the other world) and alas for your unfortunate morning of the 10th of Muharram!' I went straight in the presence of this noble and respected lady who censured me, saying, 'Are you not ashamed of God and His Prophet to cast looks on the holy ladies of the Ahlul-Baith?' I replied, 'I beg your pardon. I am a well-wisher of your family and have not come here with any evil intention.' I then went to Imam Zain-ul-abidin and requested him to take any possible service from me. He asked me if I had any money. I admitted that I was in possession of a thousand drachmas. He ordered me to pay the amount to those carrying the heads on lances and to ask them to keep at a distance from the ladies, so that the onlookers' attention might be attracted or arrested by the heads and the ladies might not be looked at by them. I acted accordingly and the head-carriers, after filling their pockets with my money, stood at a distance from the ladies.'

The city of Damascus was tastefully decorated and everywhere there was exultation and festivity. Ladies and gentlemen in gay dresses marched up and down the streets with laughter and mutual joking. Intoxicant liquors were widely distributed and many in high glee ridiculed the heads, saying, 'Here go the heads of the heretics.' When Imam Zain-ul-abidin witnessed this rejoicing, he cried, in the fulness of his heart, 'Alas! I am dragged in the capital of the Omiades, as if I were a negro slave and as if I had no supporter in this world. Know ye! my grandfather was the Prophet of Allah commissioned to preach His Religion to the whole world and I am a descendant of Ali, the Principal Believer in God and His Prophet. Alas! I ought not to have seen Damascus in this miserable condition.'

Sahl says, 'As the heads passed under a lofty balcony, on which were seated five ladies in attractive costumes, accompanied by a slave girl, one of the number picked up a stone and flung it at the head of Husain. This pained me so much that I prayed to God that she and her companions who rejoiced at her action might all be destroyed. Suddenly, the balcony came down, smashing all its occupants to pieces. The heads and the captives were taken to the gate of Yezid's palace known hereafter as 'Babus Saath' or the 'Door of Hours,' referring to the long period that the escort and the captives had to wait before Yezid permitted them to enter.

Yezid was seated on his richly decorated throne along with the infamous Merwan, when the heads and the captives reached his presence. Merwan, in a fit of joy, began to sing and swing his hips in harmony with meter of his music. The subject matter of the song was this: 'O Merwan! Thy hands enjoy the pleasure of satisfaction; how beautiful is the colour of the blood playing for joy on

thy face ; my heart rejoices at the murder of Husain and I have discharged my duty by taking revenge on him.'

Sahl says, ' I entered the palace of Yezid along with the heads, captives and the escort in charge of them. Yezid ordered the head of Husain to be taken down and placed it in a tray of gold and covered it with a handkerchief. Now, a crow flew down near Yezid and began to caw in a sad and harsh voice. Yezid, considering this to be a bad omen, recited a few lines, first addressing the crow and then giving vent to his ideas about the murder of Husain.

' O crow ! O informer of some coming evil ! Say what thou wantest to say. But what is done is done. Weep for what has happened, if thou desirest to weep. I know that power and boons are only transitory and the *fingers of time* play on every individual. If my ancestors, who had seen lances falling on Bani Khazraz in the battle of Badr, were now alive and witnessed this incident, they would have been elated with joy and would have said, " Yezid ! let thy hands be vigorous and healthy." I would not have been a son of Kunduf, had I not taken revenge on the children of Muhammad for his actions. This son of Hashim (Muhammad) only played a game with the government of the country and no message (from God) ever came to him nor had he any revelations. We have our blood-feud with the house of Ali for what he has done to us. We have killed a lion of his family who was an excellent rider too. We have killed the best of their chiefs. In retaliation for our sufferings in the battle of Badr, we created another scene of Badr, causing them to suffer instead.'

When Hinda, wife of Yezid and daughter of Abdulla bin Aumir, heard this, she came straight into the court, with no covering over her head. Yezid was startled to see his own wife present in the court, without even

a veil on her face, and rebuked her, saying, 'You have brought shame on me by your appearance in this public durbar.' 'The daughters of Fatima,' replied she, 'are standing in this pitiable state and you do not feel for them. Disgrace on you that you are grieved at my appearance!' Having said this, she returned weeping.

Yezid was a little irritated when he heard his own wife blaming and criticising him. He began filling a cup of wine and quaffed it off. Now Shimar entered the hall and, in expectation of a costly reward, said, 'Load my camel with gold and silver; for I have killed the best of men as regards both his parents and the most respected chief of Mecca and Medina. I gave him such a deadly blow with my lance that he turned and fell down on his face. I struck him with my sword most admirably.' Yezid's peevish nature, coupled with the anger and shame caused by the words of his wife, made him give a pungent reply to Shimar and he threatened him, motioning him with his sword to go away. While sipping another cup of the forbidden liquid he began striking the head of Husain with his cane, saying, 'What beautiful lips had you? O Husain! How beautiful is your head in a golden plate! Tell me, O Husain! about the blow you received with the sword!'

A Christian priest was present on the occasion, who asked Yezid to state whose head it was that was so ignobly handled by him. 'It is Husain's head' was the reply that Yezid gave. 'Which Husain?' questioned the priest. 'Son of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet' replied the shameless wretch. Upon this, the priest stood up in a rage and said, 'What made you kill him?' Yezid replied, 'The people of Iraq invited him to be their leader and he responded to their call. My governor, Obeidulla, slew him and his party for this seditious act.' 'You say

he was the grandson of the Prophet,' continued the priest, 'then who can have a better claim to the place of his grandfather? Look here, Yezid! I am the one hundred and thirtieth in descent from the Prophet David; but still the Christians respect me and carry away the soil trodden by my feet and consider it sacred. In their marriages and other rites, they take my advice. But damned be your religion! This Husain was the grandson of your Prophet, who was a few years back among you. But you attacked and slaughtered him most ruthlessly.' 'Had not the Prophet prohibited us,' said Yezid, 'from killing any individual of a nation that was under treaty obligations, I would have ordered your execution as punishment for your intrusion and inquisitiveness into my affairs. But I leave you alone, as I fear the Prophet will question me on the 'Resurrection Day.' The priest replied, 'Will the Prophet question you about nations under treaty obligations and not about his own grandson whom you have so unjustly and pitilessly murdered! Know, you Yezid! Here I see the Prophet standing by the side of Husain's head and here is Ali. I now believe in them and state, at their bidding, that *there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is his Prophet.*'

'Now, as you have accepted Islam,' said Yezid, 'I cannot be blamed for violating any international rules, if I order my men to murder you.' So saying, he commanded one of his executioners to behead the frank speaker. Several incidents of like nature occurred in the court of Yezid. He ordered the captives to be kept in prison for some time. Several times he called them to his durbar and, every time, there was fear of a revolt against him, as the result of his behaviour with the holy family of the Prophet.

Once, Yezid convened a grand durbar, inviting a great

number of guests of note and position from various quarters of Arabia and the adjoining countries. In the presence of all these, he ordered the heads and captives to be brought, intending thereby to impress on all spectators his supreme military power with which he could punish even such a man as Husain if he refused allegiance to him. The ladies of Husain had spread the long hair of their heads to hide their faces from the sight of the spectators. Sukaina, the young daughter of Husain, could not cover her face with the hair of her head, as it was too short. The rope that went round her neck, a sign of captivity, was so tight that she held it up with one hand, so that it might not suffocate her. With the other hand, she covered her face. Yezid asked her why she held the rope and hid her face. She replied, 'the rope hurts my neck, hence I hold it up. I cover my face with my hand since my hair is too short to cover it.' 'You are too little to cover your face,' replied Yezid. 'No,' retorted the noble girl. 'Though young, I am not small in dignity, for I am a granddaughter of Fatima, the highly esteemed daughter of the Prophet. We are not like ordinary girls.' A resident of Bethlehem, who was one of the guests of Yezid's court, struck with the ready wit and the prompt and noble reply of Sukaina, requested Yezid to grant the captive girl to him. On this, Sukaina trembled with fear, ran to her aunt Ummi Kulsoom, caught hold of her and said, 'Aunt! can the daughters of the Prophet be taken as slaves?' 'No. Never,' replied Ummi Kulsoom. 'He makes a false claim and cannot do that, even at the cost of his life.' 'I can give her, if I wish,' said Yezid. 'No. It is never in your power,' said Ummi Kulsoom. Then she turned towards that resident of Bethlehem and said, 'O leader of the vicious! May the Lord destroy you.'

Abu Makhnaf writes, 'Ummi Kulsoom had not finished

these words, when the fellow got a convulsion. His hands went round his neck and, with a shriek, he fell down unconscious and was a corpse, after a few minutes. Umme Kulsoom then said 'This is the result of being audacious with the daughters of the Prophet.'

This over-awed Yezid and he began making apologies to the Ahlul-Baith. But the effect of intoxicating liquors soon made him forget this. Imam Zain-ul-abidin's son, Imam Muhammad Baquir, a lean boy of about four years, was standing by the side of his father. Yezid's younger son, a stout fellow, came playing in the Court. Yezid asked Imam Muhammad Baquir, if he was prepared to wrestle with his own son. The Imam's son replied, 'We Ahlul-Baith, think it mean to wrestle; but if you want to test us, give me a knife and another to your son. Let either of us destroy the other.' Yezid nodded his head and said, 'The first leaves show the future development of a tree; what can a snake give birth to but a snake?'

The impolite words of Yezid again offended the audience. They were waiting for an opportunity to censure him and, if possible, to make him pay for the crimes he had committed. Imam Zain-ul-abidin requested Yezid to allow him to preach after the next Juma prayers were over. Yezid could not refuse the request; for, he knew a majority of his subjects looked at him with hatred and was desirous of hearing the Imam.

The Juma (Friday) came. 'The Imam was also present in the mosque. After the prayers were over, the Imam reminded Yezid of the promise he had made to allow him to preach. With a rough answer, he wanted to silence the Imam; but the audience compelled Yezid with their repeated requests, characterised with half threats, to give them an opportunity of hearing the Hijazian preach. Reluctantly, Yezid granted the request.

Thus climbed the first captive preacher on a pulpit accompanied with a jingling of the chains that bound his body. With the melody that characterises the language of Prophets, the Imam began his address. He first praised the Lord, the Creator, the Preserver and Destroyer of everything and next eulogised the Prophets from Adam down to Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Then he said:—

‘Some of you know me and, to the large majority present here who are totally ignorant of me, I now declare I am Ali, son of Husain, son of Ali. I am the son of one who performed the Haj Pilgrimage and responded to the call of Allah. I am the son of the Master of the sacred well of Zamzam and the holy Mount Safa. I am the beloved son of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet. I am the son of one who was beheaded from behind his neck and who was thirsty until he expired, while no living being has ever been prohibited from enjoying water. I am the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and the son of the Martyr of Karbala, whose companions were reduced to dust and whose ladies were sent here as presents. I am the son of one whose guileless children were butchered and whose tents were set ablaze.....’

After continuing for some time in this way, he began to lay before the audience some authorities of the Koran and the Prophet’s traditions and said:

‘We are not like ordinary people; our superiority over you all has been established in five respects.

Our house contains those places where angels used to descend. Our family has been the mine of Prophethood. We are leaders of the World by Divine appointment. Our bravery is acknowledged by all and we never submit to hardship. In eloquence, none has been a match for any of us. Every one in quest of the Divine Path must come to us to learn what it is.’

Then the Imam enumerated the troubles he and his family were put to and began weeping aloud when he touched in his speech on the inhuman murder of Ali Asghar and the cowardly act of Yezid's soldiers in depriving the ladies of their head-coverings. At this, the whole audience began to lament, with loud cries of grief.

When Yezid observed that the foundation of his monarchy was being shaken, by the address of the Imam, he ordered the crier to disturb the miraculous speaker by a loud call of 'Azan' usually shouted prior to service. The Imam observed the trick played by Yezid and sat firm in his place. When the crier said, 'Allah O Akbar,' the Imam said, 'Truly God is the Most High,' 'Real Glory and Grandeur are His and only His attributes.' When the crier shouted 'Ash-hadu-un-La-Ilaaha-Illallah' (I bear witness to the fact that there is no God but Allah), the Imam said, 'My bones, my flesh, my skin and even my hair bear witness that there is no God but Allah.' Then the crier (Muazzin) cried, 'Ash-hadu-Unna-Muhammadan, Rasul-ullah,' (I bear witness to the fact that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah), the Imam said to the crier, 'for the sake of this Muhammad, whose name you now bear, keep quiet and do not proceed.' He then turned towards Yezid and said, 'Tell me Yezid whether this Muhammad was my grandfather or yours. If you say he was your grandfather, you are a liar. But, if you say he was mine, then say why have you bound me in chains? Why have you kept my family imprisoned? Why did you kill my father and his children?'

Yezid was thunderstruck at this question. The audience woke up from a deep slumber and, in a height of anger, were looking towards their swords and the neck of Yezid who escaped from the mosque to his private residence.

Yezid saw with his own eyes that a revolutionary spirit was ripe all over his vast dominions and even in his capital. He thought the slightest act of his against the ruined family of Husain would serve as the last straw to break the camel's back. With the Oniade craft and artfulness which Yezid represented in its full measure, he assumed quite a changed attitude and began to deny having ordered the tragical murder of Husain and his companions. The ropes, fetters and chains were removed from the prisoners' persons and a more comfortable house was set apart for them.

One day, Yezid called Imam Zain-ul-abidin and his family to his court and, when they came, the ladies were allowed to sit behind a screen, with due respect. The Imam was given room on the throne by the side of Yezid; these hypocritical favours moved the Imam and his family to tears. Zainub cried, 'Alas! now we are considered to deserve a "purdah" after our faces were exposed to the sight of crowds in bazaars and durbars.' The Imam could not control his tears when he noticed Yezid just trying to mingle up right and wrong and to hush up his past acts. Yezid wanted to throw the blame on Husain, saying that the latter brought ruin on himself by not being social with him. The Imam at once retorted and proved that his father was quite innocent and did not meddle with the government, but went on peacefully discharging his religious duties in the capacity of an Imam ordained by God to keep Islam alive.

Yezid then returned the pillaged articles to the Ahul-Baith with the heads of the martyrs and put forward many excuses, saying that he had not ordered the murder of Husain but that his soldiers had acted against his orders. The Imam, perceiving Yezid's cunning policy, asked him to hand over to him the fellow who had brought about the

murder of Husain. Yezid called all those that had taken part in the battle of Karbala and, when they came, he asked Shees if he was the person that had committed the crime. He denied it and cursed Husain's murderer and threw the blame on Masaib bin Wahbia. When this man was questioned, he, in his turn, accused Shimar of the crime. At last, Qees was pointed out as the real culprit; but he was not such a fool as to stand charged, when other officers denied having a hand in the murder. He said 'Yezid! if you promise to spare my life, I shall declare the truth.' After Yezid made the promise, he said, 'O Amir! why do you blame others? The real murderer of Husain is one who sent columns after columns to the field of Karbala and laid his coffers open, allowing people to take as much wealth as they wanted, if they only were ready to kill Husain.' Yezid again asked Qees to state the name of the person who had acted in this way. Qees replied 'By God, it was you and you alone that had induced people to destroy Husain and his family and promised to enrich all those that took part in the murder.' When Yezid and the Imam looked at each other, the latter, with an impressive gaze, convinced the other of his success in proving to Yezid with mathematical sequence and exactness that Yezid, was the real culprit and his denial of the intentional murder of Husain was meaningless. Yezid cast down his head with shame and said, in a low tone, that he was ready to pay the blood penalty in the shape of gold and silver. Zainub at once retorted, 'This is worse than all you have done up till now. Can the life of Husain be counter-balanced with any wealth of this world? You value Husain very lightly.'

Yezid then called Nooman bin Basheer and ordered him to make preparations for the departure of the Ahlul-Baith to Medina with all due honour. Five hundred horsemen

were ordered to go as escort under Nooman bin Basheer. Camels, with litters on, were arranged and the Ahlul-Baith started.

They first came to Karbala and halted there for a few days. According to some authors, the heads of the martyrs were now joined with the bodies which were re-interred at Karbala. The story of the burial of the bodies of the martyrs runs as follows :—

On the night of the ninth day after the martyrdom of Husain, a party of Jews passed the field of Karbala and noted an extraordinary light streaming from the field up towards the sky. When they approached the spot, they saw a number of wild beasts standing round the bodies and mourning aloud with extended necks and raised up heads. They returned to their homes and the next morning they started to the spot with spades and crow-bars in their hands, to bury the dead bodies. On their way, lay some fields belonging to Moslems in which were working some women. The Jews were scolded by them for trespassing on the fields ; upon which the former explained, ' We have nothing to do with your fields. Last night, we observed some bodies of saints lying un-interred. We now intend to bury them.' The women made them go back, saying that they belonged to their own nationality and creed and hence the Jews had nothing to do with them. In a fit of anger, the women went to their homes and threw their veils and curtains on the faces of their husbands and said, ' You have no shame ; the Jews had come to bury the grandson of the Prophet. Put you on these veils and curtains and sit at home like females ; we will go and bury the dead bodies of the Prophet's relations.' Upon this the males proceeded and performed the funeral of the martyrs on the twentieth of Muharram.

As to the head of Husain, there are many varying

accounts and to deal with them all is out of the question. But the most reliable and true version is that Ali bin Husain-Imam Zain-ul-abidin brought it with him to Karbala and joined it with the body.

The sight of Karbala reminded the ruined family of Husain of their past misfortunes—of their irreparable loss unparalleled in the History of the World. They spent a few days in violent mourning and then they started for Medina. Zainub first refused to accompany the party, saying that she could not show her face to the young afflicted daughter of Husain left at Medina due to her illness and that she preferred to spend her remaining life as an ascetic at the grave of Husain. The Imam advised her that the life of a hermit was prohibited in Islam and that a Moslem cannot live in a jungle abandoning society. Reluctantly Zainub too started and the party proceeded towards Medina.

When the turrets of the city of Medina were sighted, the Imam asked the escort to stop. Tents were pitched here and Noman bin Basheer was asked to enter the city and announce in the Mosque of the Prophet the martyrdom of Husain and the destruction of the holy Family. The Imam sat down with a black garment on. Noman proceeded and, in a pathetic tone, went on singing in the streets the woeful story of Husain's slaughter. Crowd after crowd followed him with loud cries of mourning, until they all reached the Prophet's Mosque. Here Noman put on *a torn piece of black cloth round his neck* and began announcing the arrival of Imam Zain-ul-abidin within a short distance from the gates of the city. The whole of Medina ran frantically out of the city to greet the shattered and ruined family of the Prophet and to condole with the Imam on his sad bereavement. After violent mourning, the residents of Medina, accompanied by the Imam,

entered the city. But Zainub went straight to the Prophet's sepulchre and spread the blood-stained garment of Husain and his turban torn in many places by the blows of swords, lances and arrows, on the grave, and began crying, 'O grandfather! this is the present we have had from your disciples, Husain who played on your chest and who used to ride on your shoulders lay wounded and panting on the open field of Karbala and horses trampled over his body.'

In the meanwhile, Fatima, the ailing daughter of Husain, reached the Prophet's grave and asked her aunt what had become of her father. Again the family of Husain and other Medinites raised a chorus of sad cries. For many days, the whole of Medina was in mourning and all those who passed through its street found the inhabitants in black dress and shedding tears, bearing often the name of Husain on their lips.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

'THAT every action has a reaction' is a universal law accepted by all scientists. Every object is endowed with a certain amount of elasticity in virtue of which this law of nature is constantly maintained. A ball flung against a wall returns with a force and velocity directly proportionate to the energy originally put forth in throwing it, provided that no impediments check it and direct the energy in some other way. From this change in the direction of energy or its transformation into some other force, no rational being can deny the existence of reactionary power. The energy exerted on a certain object may not show its counter effects immediately after the incident ; but they may be reserved for some unforeseen period. A compressed bit of rubber possesses the potential energy of expanding again with a great force as soon as the force brought to bear upon it is removed. A spring wound up slowly opens and exerts back the same amount of energy as was spent in winding it up.

What is true of an object or even a single atom is true of the universe; and the law that holds good in the material world is valid also in other worlds namely mental, moral and spiritual.

Every thought of man has an existence in the world of thoughts. Every time a man thinks, such an existence issues from his mentality and, after striking itself somewhere, returns to the place whence it originated. A good thought brings back goodness to the thinker and vice versa.

Sometimes, the reactionary power of intentions can be transformed into physical actions. If the spirit gets holy or unholy, its effects are felt in a man's thoughts and thoughts are manifested in actions. Thus, one kind of energy can be changed into another kind. Spirit, mind and body being the creatures of a single Creator and being completely under His control are so intimately interconnected that the effects of any one are manifested in another.

The law, above explained, is termed 'causation' in English Philosophy which is synonymous with the 'Karma' of the Hindus. The Koran puts the same law in these words: 'If a man doeth good, it is for himself and, if he doeth evil, it is for himself.' Good or evil of a person meant for another reacts on that very same person. If humanity realises the truth of this principle, there can never be but virtue in this world. It is the ignorance of this rule that is the root of all vice and wickedness.

In this world, we can, though very rarely, come across some very virtuous people whose lives are attended greatly with adversities and misfortunes. On the other hand, we meet an enormous number of very vicious individuals to whom virtue is something unknown. But still they enjoy lives attended with abundance of happiness and crowned with successes in every direction. These incidents are inconsistent with the law of causation, if we do not believe in a future life where such people as could not in this world realise the effects of their good or evil actions shall be rewarded or punished.

Now, coming to our subject, the battle of Karbala was not merely a struggle between Husain and Yezid but a fight between virtue and vice and between Godliness and Devilry. Husain represented divine attributes in the fullest measure and in Yezid were manifest the worst evils,

the qualities of Satan. Husain, with all the virtue he possessed was humiliated to such a degree that no being before or after him can be quoted to have suffered equally for the cause of right. Hence, the reaction in this case should surpass every other reaction of the same type.'

There have been many holy personages who attained martyrdom and sacrificed their souls for the sake of religion and truth. Zacharias and John the Baptist stand very prominent among these. Their sufferings and murder caused a revolution in which thousands were slaughtered in compensation for their valuable blood. According to the Christian belief, Jesus Christ was crucified and he sacrificed his holy soul for the salvation of those believing in him. Granting this, all he possessed was his life, just as in the case of the two prophets above-mentioned and this he gave up. Truly, he should get what he expected and suffered for. But, for an unbiassed student of history, the sufferings and hardships of Jesus Christ and other Prophets taken separately or jointly sink into insignificance before the heart-rending events of the field of Karbala.

Husain earned such sincere friends that no worldly being or even a Prophet can claim to have possessed an equal number of such faithful individuals ready to sacrifice themselves and all their own. Of these he made a present to the Lord. Jesus Christ asks his disciples to present the other cheek, if one is slapped. But, when Ali Akbar, the grand looking son of Husain, was brutally murdered, he took his younger son and presented him before the cowardly mob to be transfixed with a dart. His continued hunger and thirst for full four days are incomparable in the annals of History. He left his ailing, motherless daughter at Medina, in accordance with the divine injunction and sacrificed his paternal love in obedience to the

Koranic verse 'None ailing, should any way be molested.' He took his noble and pious ladies to the desolate field of Karbala and left them exposed to severest hardships without a single supporter to take care of them. He acted in such a way that none can criticise him for bringing on the trouble himself; but he put himself in such a trend of the events that, if he had acted otherwise, there would have been an opportunity of blaming him. All this he did and all this he suffered not unknowingly but with full knowledge of the consequences. He was so firm and unshaken; because he fully trusted in the Lord and was sure that all his sufferings would certainly bear fruit.

In the natural course, the reaction began. Just after the tragedy of Karbala, there was a cry for retaliation in every nook and corner of the Moslem world. Some raised the standard of rebellion against Yezid with personal motives and wanted to gain the vast monarchy for themselves and their own children, putting forward the cause of Husain and demanding a revenge. Some in right earnest openly refuted the action of Yezid and made preparation to declare war against the brutal monarch. Finding Hedjaz free from Husain and any claimant to the caliphate, Abdulla bin Zobair made it the centre of his activities, ostensibly to revenge the murder of Husain but really to gain the throne for himself. Mukthar, a zealous and pious follower of the Prophet's family and Ibrahim, the son of the heroic lieutenant of Ali, joined together and collected a large army, with a view to punish Husain's murderers. They requested Imam Zain-ul-abidin to permit them to revenge his father's blood. To maintain the traditional aversion to bloodshed of his holy family and to be free before God of the blame of taking the law into his hands, he declined to give the permission craved for by those zealous Moslems devoted to his father.

He did not wish to compensate for the valuable life of Husain with the lives of his antagonists, because the soul of the representative of God is much higher and far more valuable than the whole world taken together. To maintain the life of an animal, thousands of vegetable lives are sacrificed and, for the preservation of a man, hundreds of animals can be slaughtered. As a man is superior to all lower beings taken together, so is the image of God, the link between man and God, much higher than the whole creation. Life cannot be exchanged for anything; specially that of a godly personage, so pure and holy, cannot be compensated for by the shedding of the blood of hundreds of brutal souls, though in the form of men. Imam Zain-ul-abidin wanted a religious reformation and preferred the narration of facts pertaining to Husain's nobility, piety, firmness of faith in God, his bravery and his strong moral fibre, unyielding to any worldly hardship, to any amount of bloodshed.

He recommended people to relate the sad events of his life; thereby giving lessons to the world how a true follower of the Prophet should behave in most trying circumstances. Above all, he wanted to inculcate that the Love of the Lord and that of his enemies cannot exist in one heart. The heart that is exclusively given to the Lord can never yield to hardship and will prefer to suffer a death attended with a world of miseries rather than acknowledge the enemy of God as his master. What pious and noble members will that community produce which gets such admirable lessons from the cradle to the grave and which has the ideal life of so saintly a personage as Husain, as the sum of its aspiration? Alas! other influences dissuade the followers of Husain, retard their mental and moral progress and do not produce the expected result.

Though the Imam refused to give consent to a revolution, it automatically developed and the whole of Arabia was a scene of battle and bloodshed. On the other side, began a mental, moral and religious reformation. 'The Rt. Honourable Saiyid Amir Ali, in his 'Spirit of Islam' summarises this aspect of the revolution in these words :—

'The tragical fate of Husain and his children sent a thrill of horror through Islam and the revulsion of feeling which it caused proved eventually the salvation of the faith. It arrested the current of depravity which flowed from the court of Damascus. It made the bulk of moslems think of what the master had done and of the injuries which the children of his enemies were inflicting on Islam.'

To add to his crimes, Yezid sacked the holy city of Medina with a view to suppress Abdulla bin Zobair, desecrated the Prophet's mosque by turning it into a stable and had a number of Medinite ladies ravished. Ansar or helpers and their children were either murdered in large numbers or were driven into exile to distant lands. Mecca had to suffer a similar fate. The more violent he was the greater was the feeling against him. Mukthar and Ibrahim succeeded in capturing and murdering almost every individual that had a hand in the murder of Husain, his relations and friends.

Even Yezid's life was in danger. His wife hated him. His son, Moawiah, criticized him for the maltreatment of the Prophet's house and the desecration of the holy cities. The guilty conscience created a constant fret in him and there was none whom he could look to as a friend.

To relieve his brain from overwhelming anxieties, Yezid often went a-hunting. About two years and six months after the tragedy of Karbala, he was murdered in a jungle when alone and thirsty and was craving for water

He had tried to chase a deer but was left unsuccessful in a desolate plain. He met a passerby whom he requested to quench his thirst. First, the man took pity on him and was about to lead him to a fountain. But, when learning that he was Yezid, the guide gave him a mortal blow with curses.

Thus ended the short regime of Yezid for whose caliphate Moawiah had laboured so hard and had acted so unjustly and against his own conscience. Moawiah founded an empire on treachery and fraud, which, when fully developed, deprived his family of the empire which it had earned them. Yezid's son Moawiah II was put on the throne; but he abdicated saying that he dreaded to occupy a place which had caused such crimes as struggling with Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, poisoning Hasan and murdering Husain. Merwan, to whose treachery and artfulness we have more than once adverted in the previous chapters, occupied the throne of Damascus and, with the free use of sword and poison, the Omiades still continued to rule for a period of 73 years. But the destructive germ that had set aside the family of Moawiah within the space of about three years after Husain's martyrdom was still present. The Abbasides, descendants of Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet were all the while planning to get rid of the Omiade rule and they could find no better ground to attain their object than the charge of the inhuman murder of Husain. They made a display of their attachment to the descendants of the Prophet and claimed that they were fighting to obtain the throne for the Fatimides. But, when they succeeded in their attempts, they assumed the so called caliphate themselves. When they found that, in all ages, the Fatimides were held in high esteem by all classes of people, their guilty conscience made them imagine that the power of the

Fatimides would throw them aside and set any of the saints of the holy family on the throne. This delusion of theirs made them commit crimes of no less magnitude than those perpetrated by the Omiades. Open warfare against the Imams was supposed to be unnecessary and was calculated to give publicity to the crime, which they feared would create another revolution and would snatch away power from their hands. Hence poison was the only means left to them to destroy the holy successors of the Prophet.

The meetings of those attached to the house of the Prophet, held often to mourn over the misfortunes of Husain, have been constantly changing the Political destiny of the Islamic world. The overthrow of the Omaide and Abbaside rule was chiefly due to such meetings. Had the other Imams followed the example of Husain, their martyrdom and sufferings would not have been so very effective and efficacious. Thus these commemorations were supposed to be quite sufficient for suppressing any future oppression practised against the Prophet's family. They have kept Islam alive; for, before relating the sad events of the field of Karbala, the preacher first prepares the minds of the audience by logically proving the existence of God, His unity, the truth of the mission of the Prophets ordained by the Lord and of the Day of Judgment. He also proves, by arguments based on common sense, the holy scriptures and the traditions that the apostolical succession is the exclusive right of Ali and his children. When these fundamental principles of Islam are fully established, he relates portions of Husain's biography, explaining thereby his position before God and his Prophet and the noble features of his character. The faith of the audience is thus re-invigorated and their souls imbibe lessons of purity, piety, valour and fixity of

character with the narration of the biography of the world-renowned hero. Suddenly, the description of Husain's misfortunes, unparalleled in history, moves the audience to tears and violent mourning. Thus, a sense of love for right and justice and a bitter hatred towards wrong and injustice is created in the hearers minds and a constant feeling of retaliation against oppressors is thus maintained.

A silent, civil life is apt to deaden the military spirit of a nation and reduce its members to cowardly creatures. But the followers of Husain can never be accused of mean cowardice and timidity under whatever subjection they may be; for the annual breast-beating and in some cities, making the shaven heads and bare backs bleed with measured beats of swords and chains, with the thrilling sound of Ya Husain, accompanied with streaming tears, the effect of sorrow and anger at the triumph of might, keep alive the sense of retaliation and military prowess.

Though the Prophet, Ali, Hasan and Husain had banners with some pictures on, the one bearing the figure of an open hand was first instituted by Mukhtar, when he raised the standard to revenge the blood of Husain. Wherever there is present even a single member of those attached to the house of the Prophet, he appears to be moody and stricken with a deep sorrow from the first appearance of the moon of Muharram. He puts on a black garment and, after cleaning and whitewashing his house, he makes the Alam or the standard bearing the picture of the hand stand on a shaft. He holds religious meetings of mourning or, so to speak, collects a regiment under the banner with a view to revenge the wrongs done by Yezid, the emblem of devilry. All this is the preparation for a crusade against wrong and is more a question of principle than of person.

If the father dies, the son weeps for a few days and, in course of time, he forgets the loss. Thus the sorrow is little by little eradicated from his mind. So is the loss of the son to the father. But the tragical fate of Husain has the miraculous effect of melting the hearts of his lovers after a period of a thousand and three hundred years. Nay Hindus, Parsis and people of various nationalities and creeds too are moved to tears on hearing his heartrending sufferings and commemorate his martyrdom regularly every year.

Whenever one hears of a man persecuted by another, the mind of the hearer naturally sides with the one oppressed and feels for him while the oppressor is looked down upon with contempt and hatred. Thus, these meetings carry on a propaganda of creating a love and sympathy for Husain and an abhorrence for Yezid. They also give lessons of siding with and helping virtue and the virtuous with all one's power. Neutrality, though harmless in appearance, is thus proved to be very injurious and virtually to undermine the virtuous and to support the vicious indirectly. The grave sermons delivered in such meetings make the audience serious and condemn amusement and jesting. By constantly attending the meetings, one learns to be polite, mannerly and social to others. They breed a sense of union and the equality of all human beings, without regard to birth, position or wealth.

In addition to these moral, mental and social benefits, the follower of the Imam expects salvation in the other world through his martyrdom as promised to all friends and lovers of Husain in the traditions of the Prophet. There are only two religions on the face of the earth that believe in redemption by means of the sacrifice of a godly being. These are Christianity and Islam, of course, I mean Islam inculcated by the Prophet and his spiritual

successors, viz., Ali and his eleven saintly descendants. The former puts forward Jesus Christ as one who suffered to save his followers from falling into the wrath of God. The latter holds Husain as one who sacrificed himself and all he owned to save his friends and believers from the punishment of hell. No doubt, redemption is impossible without bloodshed and the greater the bloodshed the greater the authority to redeem. A man cannot be totally good and his weaknesses keep him fallible. Christians and Moslems both believe that God is more merciful than wrathful. He does not desire to throw His weak creatures into the penitentiary of hell. In strict justice, none can be free from the blame of sinning. Hence, His mercy opened a road to salvation through sacrifice. According to the Moslem belief, Husain was the lamb of God and son of a man, Ali, and was butchered at Karbala for the expiation of the sins of his followers committed out of human weakness. The Christians claim these titles for Jesus Christ; but they seem to be misnomers; for Jesus Christ was, according to the Christian belief, crucified, which is not the practice in vogue of killing lambs and he was never the son of a man but of a woman, Mary. (May peace be on both.) The expressions 'God hath a sacrifice by the River Euphrates' (Jeremiah, 46-10) and the Day of Atonement which he got for his martyrdom clearly put the finger on the name of Husain as one who was butchered for the redemption of the world. But the day of pass over, which the Christians claim as the day of the crucifixion of Jesus, is itself a sign that he was saved from death.

It is un-Islamic to disbelieve in the value of sacrifices; for, when one leaves off a single fasting or takes a false oath he has to make some sacrifices in the shape of money or food to save himself from the consequence of such

sinning. The annual sacrifices at the Haj pilgrimage are certainly enjoined in Islam to commemorate the sacrifice of the son which Abraham intended to perform, but did not, for a ram was slain instead. The creator of poison has also created antidotes to nullify its effects. To save the person of a man from the blows of swords and arrows shield and armour are invented. In the same way, God has created a refuge through His mercy for sinners, if they only care to take shelter and save themselves, from falling a victim to His wrath. Thus, we believe God to be more bent on forgiving than on revenging. Hence, the religion that believes in the value of sacrifices is, in my opinion, the only true religion ordained by God to be followed by all people.

The persecutions that Jesus Christ suffered re-acted to make the Christians conquerors of the world and a student of History will wonder to find that, from his twelve disciples, the number of his followers developed to such an extent that there is not a single religion professed more largely by the inhabitants of the earth than Christianity. The same is the case with the followers of Husain. There was a time when Husain alone and dying was appealing to check the advancing hoards from entering his tents on the field of Karbala; but none cared to render any assistance to the afflicted Imam; while now, a day has come when, at the time of the anniversary of his martyrdom, the whole world echoes with the sound of 'Ya Husain.' Husainism, or the religion of loving Husain and hating his oppressors, has been increasing with wonderful rapidity. To be a Husaini, or admirer of Husain, there are no restrictions of religion, creed, nationality or birth. The Husaini Brahmans that are largely seen in the Bombay Presidency are great admirers of Husain, though they are not Moslems. The Raja of Gwalior and several other Rajas celebrate the

Muharram, in spite of the religious gulf that separates them from Islam. The fact is that, leaving off all bias or religious bigotry, the world can join on one point and that is the love of the greatest hero of the world. Let the world produce any that has proved himself by deeds more than by words to be so heroic, brave, noble and selfless as Husain. If this is impossible, let us all jointly acknowledge 'that Husain stands unique.' Thus Husainism alone can be the common religion of the world.

Husain's followers are expecting Imam Mahdi, the world teacher and a descendant of the martyred Imam to appear shortly to revenge wrongs and to establish justice and righteousness. The meetings of the Husainis are calculated to prepare regiments for his assistance. As soon as he is ready, the Husainis, from every part of the world, will rally to him with the Husaini banner in hand prepared to sacrifice their souls for the heir of Husain who will make the world Husaini or truly good and righteous.

A hundred years ago, the names of the Husainis in India could be counted on the fingers. But, thanks to the British Government, its toleration and support to the weak classes, the Husaini religion has developed under this kind rule, so that from the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin, there is one sound of 'Ya Husain' thundering during the month of Muharram and thus the world is compelled to say 'There is not a single celebration so grand and appealing as the commemoration of Husain's martyrdom.'

